



ALL NEW STORIES AND ART! PLUS **COLOR!**

VAMPIRELLA

58856
PDC
\$1.00

LUANA
THE BEAST GIRL!
TRAPPED
IN THE MIDST
OF A
TRIBAL
UPRISING...
Page 55



A FEW WORDS AND PICTURES ABOUT OUR BRAND NEW COMIC MAGAZINE.

THE SPIRIT is about to haunt your newsstand.

Who, or what, is **THE SPIRIT**?

THE SPIRIT is a new magazine brought to you by Will Eisner and the people at Warren Publishing.



THE SPIRIT is Denny Colt, private eye, killed by the underworld. He's the mysterious masked champion of justice. The little man's justice. He's a stick of human dynamite in a blue business suit, with gloves that cover fists as hard as his granite tombstone in Wildwood Cemetery. He's the outlaw who secretly works with dour, pipe-puffing Police Commissioner Dolan.

THE SPIRIT is a comic strip like you've never seen. It's a progression of mind-boggling panels, drawn with stunning three-dimensional effects. Aerial views. Ankle views. Views through binoculars and camera lenses. Views right down the barrel of a gun. Pages and pages of panels so dynamic that your eye becomes part of each scene.

THE SPIRIT is a character, a comic strip, and a magazine of timeless proportions. It is totally different from anything on your newsstand today. Eight deeply moving stories grace the pages of each issue.

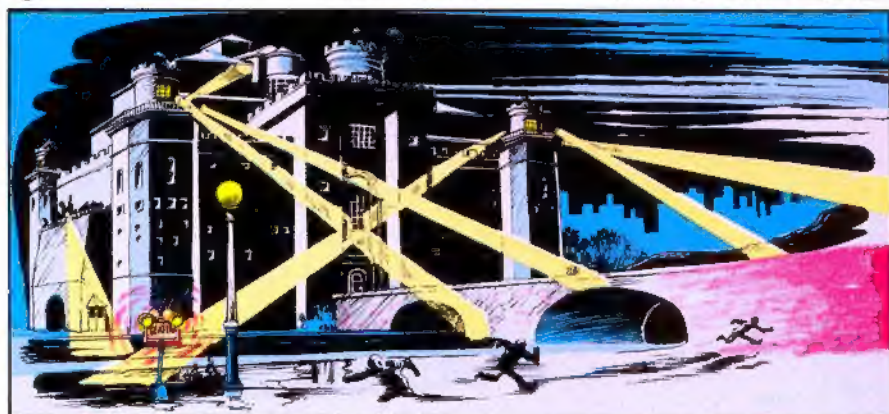
Stories of real people... not cartoon character imitations. Emotional stories. Stories of the little guy. Totally relevant to today's fast-paced, ever-changing world.

Eight pages of each mammoth issue will be in full color, rendered by the genius of comic art coloring, Richard Corben. Plus seven vintage stories in moody black and white by Will Eisner. All great stuff. All superb works of comic art. Fast paced, smart dialogue, fantastic freak shows of weird goons, crooks, fiends and victims. Brisk and breezy examples of what comic

books used to be and should be again. All carefully chosen from the golden age of **THE SPIRIT** years,



1946 to 1952. These are the 40's and 50's all over again. Who cares about the 40's and early 50's? We do. Fans do. And after seeing the first issue of Warren Publishing's **THE SPIRIT**, you'll care too. But listen.



CONTINUED ON
INSIDE BACK COVER

THE SPIRIT

"You're teasing wild dogs!"

Flaxman Loew is terrific. He should have been writing the VAMPIRELLA saga long ago.

His first two stories were well-written and plotted. The setting was excellent, placing VAMPIRELLA and Pendragon in Scotland. And adding the romantic element in the form of Alistaire MacDaemon gave just the right touch to a menace lurking in the castle and the loch.

Jose Gonzalez did his usual excellent job on the artwork. The underwater scenes in issue #29 had a surrealistic, unreal quality that made it totally believable when taken in context with the rest of the story.

All in all, a credit to the VAMPIRELLA magazine in terms of art and story.

NORMAN DAVISON
Union, N.J.

I have to congratulate your script writers and artists. It seems their talent is never ending. But most of all, my praise goes to the editor and publisher of VAMPIRELLA. It seems with this magazine, you've opened the door to a new age of explicit, honest, mature art. It's gratifying to know that everyone in the comic magazine business is not twenty-five years behind the times.

BRUCE JONES
Holland, N.Y.

This age of Spanish artists has me spellbound. They, like everyone else, must draw within the limited space offered by comic book panels. Yet their scenes come across with such detail, imagination and depth, it's frightening. Jose Gonzalez, Ramon Torrents, Fernando Fernandez, Aureleon and Munes... who do they think they are drawing like this? Neo-gods?

STEVEN JOHN
Wichita, Kan.

Just finished reading issue #29, and I must say I'm delighted! Never before have I liked every single story!

The VAMPIRELLA saga was beautiful. "The Evil Eye" and "Last Lunch for Rats" were Rod Serling-ish stories with both revenge and philosophy uniquely blended!

Being a vampire nut, "The Vampires Are Coming" drove me up a wall. I loved it!

But my favorite by far was "Stairway to Heaven." The simple storyline was beautifully thought-provoking, and Fernando Fernandez' artwork is the finest I've ever seen in print anywhere!

WANDA BUTTS
Largo, Florida

As for your experiment with leaving out the color section of VAMPIRELLA #29, you've got to understand that you're teasing wild dogs!

R.C. WARREN
Omaha, Neb.

In VAMPIRELLA #29, on the letters pages, most of your readers pointed out that VAMPIRELLA #26 was below average. Well, issue #26 was my first, and if that's an example of what you guys can produce on one of your off days, I want to be around when you're really trying!

TIM VOLK
Corry, Pa.

You've got to do something about the VAMPIRELLA series. It's gone from bad to worse in the last several months.

Under Archie Goodwin, Vampi had style, mystique. Her stories were constantly imaginative, well written, and down to earth.

When T. Casey Brennan came along, the VAMPIRELLA series went straight downhill. They lacked plot, setting, and took off into a world of total fantasy. And the dialogue was so stilted that I still find it hard to believe that T. Casey lasted an entire year on the series.

Steve Englehart's VAMPIRELLA stories were a little better. Steve brought our heroine back down to earth, but he didn't seem to know what to do with her personality. Vampi became blah and characterless for the two issue span Englehart scripted her adventures.

Then came Bill DuBay. He only wrote two VAMPIRELLA sagas, both of which were shorter in length than any previous Vampi stories. But even with this handicap, old Dube came through with a style not seen since the good old days of Goodwin. VAMPIRELLA again had personality, an earthy setting, and fast, tight action.

Len Wein's one VAMPIRELLA story was more than enough for me. No plot, no action, bad all the way around.

Now we've got Flaxman Loew. And again VAMPIRELLA is soaring off into a world of fantasy, monsters and the ethereal. But what's worse, all of Vampi's former supporting characters are gone. Gone are Adam and Dr. Van Helsing. Paul Giraud and Dracula are never to be seen again. And Rose and Patrick Pendragon are lost to us forever.

What's becoming of VAMPIRELLA?

TERRY KAEGIN
Louisville, Ky.



Jose Gonzalez has illustrated twenty consecutive issues of VAMPIRELLA stories. And readers are still amazed at the freshness, and unique quality of his artistic abilities.

Fernando Fernandez' "Stairway to Heaven" was the best story, best idea and best art I've ever seen in a comics magazine!

RICHARD NOEL
Quebec, Canada

Hey! How about some Richard Corben color in your magazine, too!

ALBERT OMEGA
New York, N.Y.

You've GOT it, Albert!

Flaxman Loew's version of VAMPIRELLA just doesn't seem to be VAMPIRELLA. He's made loveable old Pendragon a lot less loveable. And he's eliminated Adam and Conrad Van Helsing from the strip completely.

I'm entering my demand for Adam's return right now. The relationship between Adam and VAMPIRELLA was a highlight of the series. I'd also like the return of some good writing on Vampi's stories.

ANN NICHOLS
Williamsport, Md.

Your article in issue #29 on the Comic Art Convention was an unexpected surprise. Heidi Saha is a great looking chick. But next to VAMPIRELLA, her look-alike, Angelique Trouvere has got to be the prettiest girl in the world!

CLAYTON BLAKEY
Springfield, Va.

In absence of the Warren Awards for almost two years running now, I feel it is my duty to pick up where they left off... namely bring recognition to those Warren artists and writers who have brought, us so many hours of pleasure.

Here's my vote for the all-time best of everything ever to appear in VAMPIRELLA. Best cover:

VAMPIRELLA #27

Best Story: "Death's Dark Angel"

Best Writer: Bill DuBay

Best Artist: Jose Gonzalez

Best issue: VAMPIRELLA #14

GREG FUTCH
Tampa, Fla.

IT'S GOING TO BE A LONG WINTER! ESPECIALLY IF YOU DON'T WRITE!

Seems not enough of you are writing her and she's been in the dumps all week. Help an ailing vampiress today—WRITE!

The address is:
SCARLET LETTERS
c/o Warren Publishing Co.
145 East 32nd Street
New York, N.Y. 10016



NOW'S YOUR CHANCE! TELL US WHAT YOU LIKE AND DISLIKE ABOUT THE WARREN MAGAZINES!

We're inviting the readers of all Warren Magazines to answer this special questionnaire. It will take just a minute of your time, and it should be fun. And of course, we're interested in your opinions.

1. What made you buy this magazine?

2. How long have you been reading VAMPIRELLA?

- ☐ Less than six months.
☐ Six months to a year.
☐ One year to two years.
☐ Two years or more.

3. How often do you buy VAMPIRELLA?

- ☐ Fanatically (9 issues a year)
☐ Frequently (5-8 issues a year)
☐ Seldom (1-4 issues a year)
☐ This is my first issue.
☐ I have a subscription.

4. What other magazines do you read regularly?

5. Why do you buy VAMPIRELLA? (Check one or more).

- ☐ Because I generally like the magazine.
☐ Because I like the VAMPIRELLA series.
☐ I buy an issue because of its cover.
☐ I buy an issue because I see something of interest in the stories.
☐ I buy an issue because of the artists featured.
☐ I buy an issue because of the writers featured.
☐ I am a comic book freak!

6. What is your general impression of this magazine?

- ☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor

7. Which story appearing in this issue did you like most?

8. Why?

9. Which story in this issue did you like the least?

10. Why?

11. What do you look forward to most in VAMPIRELLA each month?

12. If you could eliminate any section of this magazine, what would it be?

13. If you could add a section or a feature to this magazine, what would it be?

14. Who are your favorite comic book artists?

15. Who are your favorite comic book writers?

16. For each of the series features listed below, check whether you would like to see more, less or the same in future issues.

	More	Less	Same
Vampirella	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pantha	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fleur	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Luana	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

17. Would you prefer to see more, less or the same number of continuing character series in VAMPIRELLA?

- More ☐ Less ☐ Same ☐

18. What type of series or series character would you like to see in VAMPIRELLA?

Name _____ Age _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please clip and mail this questionnaire to:

All replies received before February 7, 1974 will be acknowledged personally. Thank you.

W.B. DuBay Editor

VAMPIRELLA MAGAZINE
 Warren Publishing Co.
 145 E. 32nd Street
 New York, N.Y. 10016

VAMPIRE'S VAULT

A SNAKY DOUBLE-BARRELLED PROFILE OF

W.R. MOHALLEY

A BEHIND-THE-SCENES WARREN STAR...

Thousands of letters pour into the offices of Warren Publishing each day. And out of every thousand or two, there's always one letter from this little six-year old kid down in Pookeepsie, Alabama, who demands to know who W.R. Mohalley is, and why his name appears on the contents page of every Warren magazine.

In response to this overwhelming deluge of mail (from that brat down in Alabama) we present this special double-barrelled profile of the behind-the-scenes man who made Warren Publishing what it is today!



W.R. Mohalley, or Billy The Kid, as he is known around the Warren offices, is the one man production department of CREEPY, EERIE and VAMPIRELLA magazines. He spends his days hunched over his drawing board, sniffing the fumes of rubber cement as he pastes together the letters pages, features pages and contents pages of the three Warren magazines.

Like most artists, The Kid likes to sign his artistic accomplishments, so we let him put his name on the contents page of every issue.

When the kid isn't ecstatically bent over his drawing board, he doubles as the office whipping boy. Should publisher Warren or

editor DuBay arrive at the office in an off mood, we send The Kid in to see them. He generally returns to his drawing board bruised and broken. But it leaves both editor and publisher in a tolerable mood for the remainder of the day!

The Kid was born and raised in the Bronx section of New York. Anyone can tell that instantly upon meeting him. His Bronxese dialect is indecipherable to the average English speaking New Yorker.

His goals in life? To grow old gracefully with his rubber cement jar, pasting together the letters, features and contents pages of his three favorite magazines...

...PLAYBOY, PENTHOUSE, and OUI.



VAMPIRELLA

INSIDE EVERY GIRL IS *ANOTHER GIRL* WHO WANTS TO GET OUT AND MARRY A *MILLIONAIRE!* GOLD-DIGGERS ARE *EVERYWHERE* THESE DAYS.

YOU WOULD HAVE THOUGHT, IF YOU WERE THE AMBITIOUS MOTHER OF THE *BEAUTIFUL DRAKULONIAN, VAMPIRELLA*, THAT THE LITTLE GIRL HAD DONE PRETTY WELL...TO GET HERSELF ENGAGED TO A *SUN-GOD*... WOULDN'T YOU?

IT FALLS TO FEW GIRLS TO MARRY MILLIONAIRES. AND THE WAY THINGS ARE NOWADAYS, COUNTS, DUKES, PRINCES AND EMPERORS ARE EVEN HARDER FOR A BRIGHT GIRL TO GET HER WELL-MANICURED HOOKS INTO.

WHICH ONLY GOES TO SHOW THAT YOU'VE NO IDEA WHAT IT CAN *DO* TO A GIRL, TO BE...

THE BETROTHED OF THE SUN-GOD!



IT HAPPENED ONLY SCANT SECONDS BEFORE...
IN PARIS, THE CITY OF LIGHT, CRADLE OF
EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION, HOME OF...

THE CHAMPS ÉLYSEES... WITH ITS OUTDOOR
CAFES AND SHOPPES... WHERE ONE SIPS APERTIF
AND THINKS AND LOOKS... OR MAYBE, JUST **LOOKS...**

...LOOKS AT THE
**SIDEWALK
STROLLERS.** THE
PARISIENS AND THE
PARISIENNES...THE
FLANEURS, SERENE
IN THE CARAPACE OF
THEIR INWARD-
LOOKING
NARCISSISM...THE
PRETTY WOMEN,
THE TARTS, THE
BROADS...



**ONE WOMAN, ON
THIS PARTICULAR
COCKTAIL HOUR, MAKES
THE OTHER STROLLERS
OF THE CHAMPS
ÉLYSEES SEEM LIKE
SACKS OF POTATOES
DONE UP WITH STRING...**

**ONE LEOPARD-
SKINNED
PACKAGE OF
FEMALE
PAZZZ
HAS EVERY EYE
TURNING...**

...WHEN OUT OF THE BLUE



**ONE EXPERIENCED ONLOOKER, IN PARTICULAR, IS
ENCHANTED BY WHAT HE SEES. SAURIAN EYES WIDEN
WITH DESIRE. HE TAKES TO HIS FEET...**



KEEP THE CHANGE,
GASTON! L'AMOUR
CALLS WITH A CLEAR,
BRIGHT VOICE!

MERCI,
MONSIEUR LE
COMTE! GOOD
HUNTING!

**AND THE OLD GENTLEMAN STROLLS WITHIN TOUCHING
DISTANCE OF HIS DESIRES...**



HEM!
CHERE
MAM'SELLE...

**...A SEARING, PENCIL-THIN FLASH OF SUNLIGHT -
TURNS HIM INTO A HEAP OF SMOULDERING ASH!**



OH, NO!...NOT
AGAIN!

EEEEEEEEKKK!

AND THAT WAS THE END OF THAT...

THE CURIOUS PSYCHIC AND BODY CHEMISTRY THAT COMMANDS OUR LIKES AND DISLIKES HAS THROWN TOGETHER THE RAVISHING **BLOOD-IMBIBING** BEAUTY FROM **THE PLANET DRAKULON** AND THE ELDERLY, CHARMING **LUSH**. THEIR RELATIONSHIP IS **PLATONIC** AND SEEMINGLY **INDISSOLUBLE**.

HE DID IT AGAIN, PENDY!
THIS NICE OLD GENTLEMAN
WAS JUST GOING TO SAY
"HELLO" TO ME...WHEN
... **SPLAT!!**

AWFUL TO
CONTEMPLATE,
VAMPI MY
DEAR!

THAT'S RIGHT, HE'S GIVEN ME
TILL NEXT NEW MOON TO MAKE UP
MY MIND, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.
MEANWHILE... ANY MAN WHO SO
MUCH AS **LOOKS** AT ME IN THAT
KIND OF WAY GETS **BURNED**
TO ASHES!

YOU REALLY ARE
QUITE...ER...**ATTRACTED**
TO HIS HUITZILOPOCHTLI
FELLER, AREN'T YOU,
MY DEAR?

MMMMM!
WHEN A GIRL'S
MADE IT WITH A
SUN-GOD, SHE'S
KIND OF **SPOILED**
FOR EVERY OTHER
MAN!

LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT, DEAR...AFTER WHAT
HAPPENED IN **MEXICO**,* YOU ARE NOW **BETROTHED**
TO THE AZTEC SUN GOD **HUITZILOPOCHTLI**.
HOWEVER, THE COURTSHIP CAN ONLY TAKE PLACE ON
ONE NIGHT A MONTH...ON THE NIGHT OF THE NEW
MOON. AND, IF YOU WANT TO
IMPROVE ON THIS... LIKE, IF
YOU WANT TO **EMBRACE**
THROUGH AN ETERNITY
OF CEASELESS PASSION
...YOU FIRST HAVE TO
DIE! DO I GET IT
RIGHT?

PENDRAGON AND VAMPIRELLA ARE IN PARIS FOR A REASON.

MY AUNT AGATHA, WHO MARRIED A
FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH
REPUBLIC, MAY HAVE LEFT HER
CONSIDERABLE **FORTUNE** TO ME.
THE ONLY TROUBLE IS...I DON'T
KNOW HER WHEREABOUTS,
OR EVEN IF SHE IS
STILL IN **THE LAND**
OF THE LIVING...

AND THAT'S WHY
YOU INSISTED WE
COME TO **PARIS**,
PENDY? YOU EXPECT
TO FIND YOUR
AUNT HERE?

PERHAPS, I HAVE HERE, A LETTER..."**CHER MONSIEUR,**
I HAVE HEARD OF YOUR TROUBLE. IT IS MY LIFE'S WORK
TO HELP SUCH AS YOURSELF. PRESENT YOURSELF AT
THE **VILLA GASPARI**, IN THE **RUE GUILLOTINE**,
AND I SHALL BE PLEASED TO CONDUCT A
SEANCE, TO SEE IF YOUR **LOVED ONE** HAS
CROSSED THE VOID."SIGNED...
AMELIE DE MORT!

THE *RUE GUILLOTINE* IS NAMED AFTER THAT SAME DOCTOR JOSEPH IGNACE GUILLOTIN WHO INTRODUCED THE FAMILIAR MACHINE OF *DECAPITATION* TO FRANCE. THE *VILLA GASPARI*, AT LEAST, STANDS MORE SALUBRIOUS THAN THE VICTIMS WHOSE *EXECUTIONS* IT HAS WITNESSED.



THERE IS A SEANCE PROCEEDING IN THE VILLA, AND AMALIE DE MORT IS SPEAKING WITH THE *TONGUE OF THE DEAD*.



THERE IS ANOTHER SIDE TO *THE BUSINESS* THAT IS CARRIED ON AT THE *VILLA GASPARI*...



BUT THIS IS NO **ORDINARY** BATH WATER...ITS KISS **BURNS** AND DESTROYS...SOMETHING LIKE **ACID**..!

AS A MATTER OF FACT
A **WHOLE LOT** LIKE
ACID!

THERE GOES
ANOTHER TEN MILLION
FRANCS INTO THE PURSE
OF MADAME!

A VOICE...

HER BEAUTY MAKES
THE BRIGHT WORLD DIM,
AND EVERYTHING BESIDE
SEEMS LIKE THE FLEETING
IMAGE OF A SHADE.

OH!

MORNING COMES, THE BLUE SKY AND THE WINE-LIKE
AIR TAKES VAMPIRELLA DOWN TO THE BANKS OF THE
IMMORTAL **SEINE**.

SO LOVELY... I
HAVEN'T BEEN SO
HAPPY SINCE I LEFT
DRAKULON.
SOMETIMES I FEEL
THAT OLD EARTH
COULD REALLY BECOME
HOME TO ME.

YOU'RE A
POET?... YOU
WROTE
THAT?

I AM A POET...YES.
BUT THAT WAS WRITTEN
BY A GREATER POET
THAN I SHALL EVER
BE!

SHELLEY WAS INSPIRED BY LOVELINESS. I, TOO,
FEEL **INSPIRATION** COURISING THROUGH MY VEINS.
I THINK I SHALL WRITE A POEM FOR **YOU** THAT WILL
BE THE BEST THING I HAVE EVER DONE, OR SHALL
EVER DO.

I...I WOULD
LOVE THAT.

AT THAT MOMENT, IT IS AS IF A CLOUD PASSES ACROSS
THE SUN. VAMPIRELLA SHIVERS WITH A SUDDEN CHILL -
AND SHE REMEMBERS...

NO!
PLEASE! NOT THIS ONE!
NOT HIM!

MAM'SELLE?
I DO NOT
UNDERSTAND...



THAT NIGHT, WHILE VAMPIRELLA IS CHANGING TO GO OUT...



THE MOON LOOKS DOWN BENIGNLY THROUGH HER WINDOW.



AT THE VILLA GASPARI, MADAME DE MORT AND HER SPOUSE ARE HOLDING A "BUSINESS CONFERENCE."

WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH THIS PENDRAGON CHARACTER, MY DEAR AMELIE?

SMALL FRY! I THINK MAYBE I SHALL TELL HIM THAT HIS AUNT IS DEAD AND MILK HIM FOR CONSULTATION FEES TILL THE SITUATION BECOMES MORE CLEAR.



WHAT OF ELOISE DUVALIER?

SHE HAS OBEYED HER DARLING 'MAMA' AND IS BRINGING THE WILL 'ROUND HERE TONIGHT! SERGE WILL DISPOSE OF HER IN THE USUAL MANNER!

EXCELLENT!



SHORTLY AFTER, VAMPIRELLA AND PENDRAGON ARRIVE IN THE RUE GUILLOTINE.

THANKS TO THE THRILL OF THE POEM, I FORGOT TO DRINK MY BLOOD SUBSTITUTE BEFORE I CAME OUT! IT'S BEEN JUST TWENTY-FOUR HOURS SINCE THE LAST DOSE! I AM IN A VERY CRITICAL STATE OF BLOOD-LUST!



IF I WERE TO BE OVER-STIMULATED, I COULD BE DANGEROUS TO ANYONE WHO PRESENTED A BARED JUGULAR!

I WON'T WORRY PENDY WITH IT. AFTER ALL, WHAT CAN BECOME OF SOME OLD SEANCE?



PLEASE TO ENTER. MADAME AWAITS YOU.



MADAME DE MORT? MY NAME'S...

I FEEL THE VIBRATIONS BEGINNING! A PRESENCE IS IN THIS ROOM! BE SEATED AT ONCE, AND LET THE SEANCE COMMENCE!



A VOICE OF THUNDER SPLITS THE SILENCE OF THE VILLA!

LET THE UNIVERSE TREMBLE! I AM HUITZILLOPOCHTLI! LORD OF THE SUN! I HAVE BEEN DEFILED! THE BETROTHED OF THE SUN-GOD HAS PLAYED THE HARLOT!

NO... NO!



WAS NOT THE BLOOD OF
COUNTLESS MILLIONS SHED
FOR THE SUN-GOD'S DELIGHT?
HOW THEN SHALL HUITZILPOCHTLI
BE PLACATED? THE BLOOD OF ONE
MERE POET IS NOT ENOUGH TO WIPE
OUT THE SHAME!

...LET IT BE KNOWN THAT, TO ATONE
FOR MY BETROTHED'S BETRAYAL,
THIS CITY AND ALL IN IT...INCLUDING
THE ACCURSED POET... SHALL PERISH
TOMORROW AT MIDDAY!

MADAME AWAKENS...THE SEANCE BREAKS UP IN CONFUSION...

WHERE...
WHERE
AM I?

MONSIEUR AND MADAMOISELLE,
I MUST ENTREAT YOU TO LEAVE.
MY WIFE IS, AS YOU SEE, VERY
DISTRESSED.

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO,
AMELIE...PUT US OUT OF
BUSINESS? WHAT WAS ALL
THAT HOGWASH ABOUT
THE SUN-GOD?

SUN-GOD? WHO
SAID ANYTHING ABOUT
A SUN-GOD? I DON'T
KNOW WHAT
YOU'RE TALKING
ABOUT! GO GET
ME A DRINK...I
FEEL AWFUL!

OUTSIDE, IN THE RUE GUILLOTINE...

THAT WAS THE
AUTHENTIC VOICE
OF YOUR
BETROTHED...
RIGHT?

THAT WAS HUITZILPOCHTLI!
BECAUSE THAT BOY'S POEM
TOUCHED AT MY HEART, HE'S
GOING TO TURN PARIS INTO
A HOLOCAUST!

SUDDENLY...

HE-E-E-ELP!
FOR PITY'S
SAKE, HELP
ME!

WE DON'T WANNA GET MIXED UP IN **ANY MORE** TROUBLE, VAMPI! LET'S GET THE HELL OUTTA THIS NEIGHBORHOOD!

I SENSE THE PRESENCE OF LIFE-LOATHING EVIL. I'VE FELT IT EVER SINCE I CAME HERE...



THE LOVELY DRAKULONIAN METAMORPHOSIZES IN HER **BAT-PERSONA**...



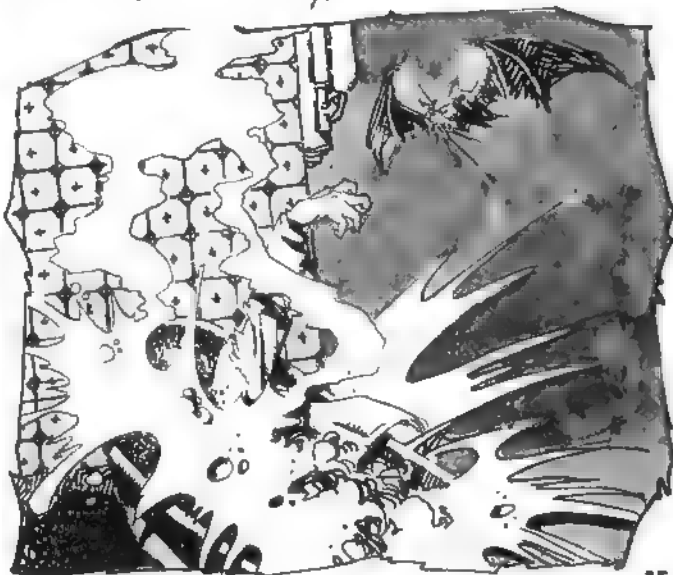
ELOISE DUVALIER IS POISED ON THE **THRESHOLD** OF ETERNITY!

HEH! ONE MORE LINGERING **SQUEEZE**... THEN INTO THE **BATH** WITH YOU **MY PETITE**!



THE BAT'S NEEDLE-SHARP **FANGS** SINK DEEP, AND THE TINY MOUTH SUCKS IN **HOT LIFE-BLOOD**!

GNAAA-A-AGGGHH!



NO ONE SEES THEM, NO ONE HINDERS THEM... AS VAMPIRELLA LEADS THE SWOONING GIRL OUT OF THE HOUSE OF HORROR.

OH, NO! WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HER?

PUT THAT FLASK AWAY AND CALL A CAB! THIS KID'S HAD ALL SHE CAN HANDLE TONIGHT!

VAMPIRELLA
OUT!



THERE WILL NEVER BE A TENTH VICTIM, ELOISE! I THINK I SEE A WAY TO RID THE WORLD FOREVER OF THE DE MORTS!

...AND, INCIDENTALLY, SAVE PARIS!



LATER, IN VAMPIRELLA'S HOTEL ROOM...

SO THE DE MORTS TRICKED YOU INTO MAKING THAT WOMAN YOUR HEIRESS?

YES! I HANDED OVER THE WILL TONIGHT. AND THEN THAT... **THAT HUMAN BEAST**... BEGAN TO KILL ME! HE BOASTED THAT I WAS THE **TENTH VICTIM**!

IN THE DAWN, THE GIRL FROM DRAKULON CLIMBS TO MONTMARTRE! THERE, HIGH ABOVE THE SLEEPING CITY OF LIGHT, SHE OFFERS HERSELF TO THE FLAMING BALL OF THE RISING SUN...

HUITZILLOPOCHTLI, LORD OF THE SUN! YOUR BETROTHED CONFESSES HER FAULT! IT'S TRUE I ALLOWED MYSELF TO BE BLINDED WITH **TENDERNESS**... BUT I SWEAR I WILL NEVER SEE THE POET AGAIN!



I REALIZE THAT THE **SHAME** MUST BE WIPED OUT WITH **BLOOD**! BUT NOT THE WHOLE OF PARIS, MY BETROTHED! STRIKE WITH YOUR **THUNDERBOLT** ON JUST ONE SPOT... AND **DESTROY EVERYTHING THERE!**



WHO IS THIS WHO LOOMS OVER THE WAKENING OF
NORRIS THE SKY IN A CHARIOT OF FLAME?

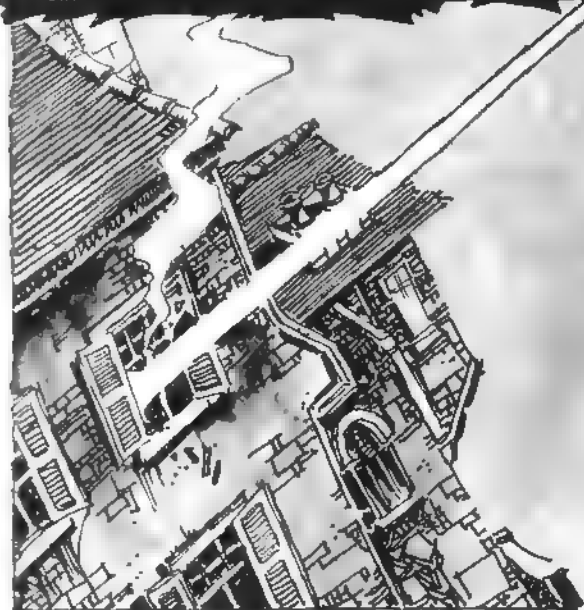
IT IS HUITZILOPOCHTLI, SUN-GOD OF THE AZTECS!
ONLY THE EYES OF VAMPIRELLA CAN BEHOLD HIM...FOR AN
ORDINARY MORTAL TO LOOK UPON THE SUN IS TO COURT
BLINDNESS AND DEATH!

HUITZILOPOCHTLI IS
PLACATED! YOU ARE PARDONED,
MY BETROTHED! MY THUNDERBOLT
SHALL FALL WHERE YOU DIRECT!
FAREWELL...TILL THE NIGHT OF
THE NEW MOON, WHEN
HUITZILOPOCHTLI WILL
REQUIRE YOUR
ANSWER!

I WILL GIVE
YOU MY ANSWER
...ON THAT
NIGHT!



MADAME NEVER FINISHES! AT MIDDAY, A SEARING
SHAFT OF SUNLIGHT BLASTS FROM THE ZENITH...
SCORCHING THE VILLA GASPARI TO ASHES...!



THE MIDDAY SUN SHOWS UP THE MOULDERING STONES
OF THE VILLA GASPARI IN A PITILESS GLARE.



THE DE MORTS ARE PUZZLED AND FRIGHTENED.

WHERE'S THE GIRL? THAT'S
WHAT I WANT TO KNOW!
AND WHAT HAPPENED TO
SERGE? TELL ME THAT!

YOU ARE GETTING
SHRILL, MY DEAR!
QUITE SIMPLY, THE
TIME HAS COME TO
CLOSE DOWN THE
BUSINESS AND
RETIRE TO...



...AND ALL IN IT!



ON THE NIGHT OF THE *NEW MOON*, THE LOVELY
DRAKULONIAN KEEPS HER *TRUST* WITH HER
BETROTHED. HUITZILOPOCHTLI RAISES HER UP,
HIGH ABOVE THE CITY OF LIGHT...



THEY EMBRACE IN A COSMIC PASSION... *BUT...*



IT WAS NOT THE
SAME! EVERYTHING HAS
CHANGED! YOU HAVE
CHANGED!



AS SHE SAYS, LATER, TO PENDRAGON:



IT TOOK A WALK
BESIDE THE RIVER SEINE...
A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG POET...
AND HIS POETRY... TO BRING
ME DOWN TO EARTH.



Prologue:

AN ABRUPT *END* TO A YOUNG MAN'S WRITING CAREER! HE HAD THE MISFORTUNE TO FIND A *NAKED LADY* ON HIS DOORSTEP AND THE MISGUIDED *CHIVALRY* TO LET HER *SPEND THE NIGHT*.

POOR SCHMUCK! HE REALLY GOT THE *PRIZE* FOR HELPING ME!

I BETTER TRY ON SOME OF HIS *CLOTHES* AND *BEAT IT!*

NOT A *BAD FIT!*

BUT I'LL HAVE TO WEAR *FIVE* PAIRS OF HIS *SOCKS*... OR THE *SHOES* WILL NEVER *FIT!*



THAT SILLY WARREN'S LEFT HIS *DOOR* OPEN!

DON'T HE REALIZE HE'LL GET *MUGGED* OR SOMETHING IF HE KEEPS THIS *UP?*

AT LONG LAST, MRS. TRENT'S *FEARS* HAVE BORN FRUIT. SHE'LL BE ABLE TO TELL *EVERYONE*... SHE'S THE LANDLADY IN A BUILDING WHERE A *MURDER* TOOK PLACE! SHE DOES HER REQUIRED *LINES*...



AIN'T SEEN *HER* BEFORE...



AL RALESKY

PAINTED



WE HAVE HERE A GIRL AND A SITUATION. THE GIRL IS JUST *THIS SIDE OF MATURITY...* AND HAS *CROSSED* THE LINE OF *VIOLENCE!* THE SITUATION MATTERS ONLY. IN THAT THIS IS *NOT* EVEN THE FIRST TIME SHE HAS KILLED! BUT, EVEN SO, HER STILL SOMEWHAT *ADOLESCENT MIND CANNOT ACCEPT* WHAT SHE HAS DONE... NOR TRULY *GRASP* EXACTLY WHAT SORT OF A BEING SHE HAS BECOME...

AND SHE BEGINS TO *WONDER!* HOW MANY TIMES *BEFORE* HAVE I *KILLED* AND NOT EVEN *KNOWN* IT? HOW MANY TIMES?

I HAVE TO *FIGURE THIS OUT!* I DON'T EVEN KNOW *WHEN* IT'LL HAPPEN AGAIN!

AND I *LIKED* IT THAT'S A WEIRD TRIP!

GOTTA TALK TO *BLUE!*



FAMILY TIES!

BLUE WILL HELP ME!



A WOULD-BE ROCK SINGER...

HE PARADES BEFORE THE MIRROR...
CHECKING OUT HIS NEW COSTUME...
GAGING THE WHOLE EFFECT...

HE LIKES THE LENGTH OF HIS OWN
HAIR... APPRECIATES THE WAY IT
FALLS... AND, AS FOR THE CAPE...



...WELL, THAT'S SOMETHING
ELSE AGAIN...

BLUE!
THANK GOD
YOU'RE
HOME!



GREEN



PLEASE, BLUE!
THIS REALLY WEIRD
TRIP HIT ME LAST
NIGHT! YOU'RE NOT
GONNA BELIEVE
IT! I...

COME OFF IT!
I'VE ALREADY GOT
IT FIGURED! THAT
OVERAGE SWINGER,
YOUR BOSS, FINALLY
MADE THE RIGHT
OFFER, DIDN'T
HE?



YEH, I'M HOME!
AND THAT'S WHERE
YOU SHOULD'VE BEEN
LAST NIGHT! WHERE
THE HELL WERE
YOU?

BLUE!
LISTEN, MAN!
YOU GOTTA HELP
ME! I... I KILLED
A MAN LAST
NIGHT!





HE TURNS AWAY, NOT
CARING NOR EVEN
WONDERING HOW
MUCH INJURY HE HAS
CAUSED HER...!



**POOR BLUE! HE REALLY BLEW IT THIS
TIME! BUT, AFTER ALL, HE SHOULD HAVE
KNOWN BETTER THAN TO BADMOUTH HIS
MEAL TICKET..!**



BUT WARREN AND BLUE AREN'T THE ONLY ONES. THERE ARE OTHERS, PANTHA, WHOSE LIVES HAVE BEEN TOUCHED BY YOU...

IT... IT'S THE SAME GUY. I'M SURE IT IS!

WHEN HE TOLD ME THAT STORY LAST NIGHT, I FIGURED IT WAS JUST AN ELABORATE BAR-ROOM LIE!



BUT NOW I DON'T KNOW!

AFTER-ALL, IF THAT GIRL WERE, LIKE HE SAID, ABLE TO TRANSFORM INTO A CAT...



THAT MIGHT JUST EXPLAIN WHY HE WAS FOUND THIS MORNING RIPPED TO SHREDS!



THIS HAS GOT TO BE MORE THAN JUST A COINCY...

WHA! IT'S HER!



DAMN! LOST HER! SHE'S GONE...



...INTO THE STENCH OF WHAT FOR MANY,
MANY YEARS WAS THE ONLY WORLD SHE KNEW...

AH!
SWEET HOME
OF MY
CHILDHOOD...!

TOK
TOK
TOK

THE ONLY WORLD THEY
LET HER KNOW...

WELL
I'LL BE...

EDITH!

EDITH, LOOK
WHO'S HERE!
LITTLE MISS HIGH
AN' MIGHTY
HERSELF!

COME BACK
FOR A HANDOUT,
HUNH?

HANDOUT...
BULL! YOU CAME
TO GIVE YOUR FLESH
AND BLOOD SOME
OF THAT **BIG**
BREAD YOU BEEN
MAKIN' SHAKIN'
YOUR TAIL,
AIN'TCHA?

CUT
IT, POP!

THERE'S ONLY
ONE THING I WANT
TO KNOW FROM YOU
TWO, THEN I'LL BE
OUT OF YOUR LIVES
FOR GOOD..!





SHE WAS ALWAYS TRYIN' T START TROUBLE!

BUT I RECKON I CAN STILL TAME YOU DOWN TO SIZE, MISS SMARTY!

BEAT HER, ART! SHOW HER...!

THEN, WE'LL SEND HER BACK TO THAT FAYETTEVILLE FOUNDLING HOME WHERE SHE BELONGS!

GETTING BEAT IS NOTHING NEW IN THIS COZY, LITTLE FAMILY...



BUT OUR HEROINE'S REACTION IS INDEED SOMETHING NEW... EVEN TO HERSELF! NOW, FOR THE FIRST TIME, PANTHA, YOU WILL YOURSELF TO CHANGE, AND YOU FEEL YOURSELF CHANGING, AND YOU ARE GLAD! YOUR ANGER BECOMING A DEADLY SNARL! YOUR FINGERS BECOMING CLAWS! SLEAK BLACK HAIR COVERING YOUR BACK! TONIGHT, THE TABLES HAVE TURNED... FOREVER!



NOW ONE OF THEM IS DEAD... THE OTHER, SCREAMING... TRYING TO REACH THE DOOR... TRYING TO ESCAPE...

WHAT IS THE **SOUND** OF BLOOD
CATCHING IN A PERSON'S THROAT?

... THEN, **SPURTING FREE**, AS THAT
PERSON'S **INSIDES ARE RIPPED AWAY?**



WHAT INDEED ARE THE
SOUNDS OF VIOLENT,
MANGLING **DEATH?**
YOU LEARN THESE
SOUNDS THIS DAY,
PANTHA...



AND THERE'S A **PART** OF
YOU THAT SAYS SUCH SOUND
SHOULD **NOT SEEM ALIEN**
TO YOU...! THERE IS A PART
OF YOURSELF THAT UNTIL
A FEW DAYS AGO YOU
NEVER KNEW **EXISTED...**
A PART THAT HAS KNOWN
FOR YEARS, PERHAPS FOR
CENTURIES, WHAT IT MEANS
TO **KILL !!**

JEZUZ! MY
D.T.'S ARE REALLY
GETTING **ABSDURD!**



THERE IS SO MUCH, PANTHA, ABOUT
YOURSELF YOU JUST DON'T **UNDERSTAND!**
SO MUCH TO **DO...** SO MUCH YOU **WANT**
TO DO... SO MUCH YOU **MUST DISCOVER...**

... AND NOW, FOR THE **FIRST TIME**, YOU ARE **FREE!**

...FREE TO FIND OUT **WHO YOU FEALLY ARE!**

Prologue:

YOU COULD HEAR THE *WUSH...* THE SILENCED VOICES OF THE CROWD AS THE FIGURE WAS BROUGHT FORWARD! SIX JUDGES SAT CENTER COURT IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF GRIM EXPECTANCE!

THE CHARGE WAS **SATANISM... MURDER!** THE ACCUSED, A HIGH-RANKING CAPTAIN IN CASTILLA'S KINGDOM.

...YET IN CASTILLA'S KINGDOM, EVEN A NOBLEMAN MAY BE BURNED AT THE STAKE!



THE PRIEST'S VOICE WAS SOLEMN. THIS WAS A VERY GRIM... A VERY **SERIOUS** AFFAIR.

THE HEARING BEGAN...

DON FERNANDEZ ALAMO, TAKE THE **OATH** SWEARING TO EXONERATE YOUR CONSCIENCE BEFORE THIS NOBLE AND JUST TRIBUNAL!

I, DON FERNANDEZ ALAMO, SWEAR IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND MY KING THAT EVERYTHING I'M ABOUT TO RELATE BEFORE THIS TRIBUNAL WILL BE THE TRUTH.

FOR TO COMMIT PERJURY BEFORE SUCH A SAINTLY AND NOBLE GATHERING WOULD BE TO SELL MY SOUL TO THE DEVIL... TO DIE IN THE TORMENT OF HELL'S ETERNAL FLAMES... AND TO ACCURSE MY FAMILY'S GOOD NAME!

THIS, YOUR MAJESTY, RELIGIOUS MEN, AND NOBLE JURISTS OF CASTILLA, IS...



THE TRUTH!

FOUR YEARS I WAS AWAY FROM HOME... FIGHTING FOR THE GREATER GLORY OF MY BELOVED SPAIN. HUNDREDS WERE THE TIMES I LED MY MEN TO VICTORY FOR THE EMPIRE. NEVER WAVERING... ALWAYS ON ATTACK!



WHEREVER OUR ENEMIES LAY, THEY FELT THE STEEL GRIP OF OUR MIGHT, THE HARDNESS OF OUR ARM. AND I WAS EVER AT THE FORE, RISKING MY LIFE ALONGSIDE MY MEN, AS WE CUT OUR WAY INTO NEW BATTLE FRONTIERS.

ALL EUROPE WAS AT OUR FEET.



THEN, A SIMPLE SHAF OF WOOD STOPPED ME! AN ARROW FIRED CLOSE TO MY HEART ROBBED ME OF LEADING MY MENTO FINAL VICTORY. MY DAYS OF CONQUEST AND GLORY WERE ENDED.



I RETIRED FROM ACTIVE SERVICE, AND RETURNED TO MY BELOVED HOME!

I HAD NOT BEEN IN MY HOMETLAND BUT A FEW HOURS WHEN I WAS ACCOSTED BY ZESAR, THE BLIND BEGGAR...

HO, BEGGAR, I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT YOU DEAD BY NOW.

IF SO, YOU MUST LISTEN TO MY HUMBLE WARNING...

HORRORS BEYOND IMAGINATION LIE WAITING FOR YOU... THEY DWELL IN YOUR OWN HOUSE!

DON FERNANDEZ ... IS IT TRULY YOU AFTER SO MANY YEARS?

ZESAR'S WORDS WERE FORBODING/ I CHOSE TO SHUT THEM OUT RATHER THAN DAMPEN MY JOYOUS RETURN...

BEGONE, BEGGAR! YOU DELAY MY HOME-COMING WITH OLD WIVES' TALES!

MY HOME WAS UNCHANGED! AFTER FOUR YEARS IT WAS EXACTLY AS I HAD REMEMBERED!

I WHISTLED TO HER AS I USED TO. BUT SHE WAS NOT THERE TO HEAR ME...

SHE WAS ATTENDING TO A MEAL WHEN I TOOK HER COMPLETELY UNAWARES...

NO MATTER! I'D RATHER SURPRISE HER ANYWAY.

MARY... MY DEAR, SWEET MARY. HOW MUCH I HAVE DESIRED THIS MOMENT. HOW LONG IT'S BEEN SINCE I'VE GONE WITHOUT YOUR EMBRACE.

MARY WOULD HAVE WANTED IT TO BE THE SAME AS IT WAS WHEN I LEFT SO LONG AGO

AND SO WOULD I!

OH, MY DARLING HUSBAND. I'LL NEVER CEASE THANKING GOD FOR BRINGING YOU BACK TO ME!

IT IS GOOD TO BE **BACK** AGAIN. BUT WHERE ARE OUR SONS... AND THE SERVANTS?

MUCH HAS **HAPPENED** IN THE YEARS YOU'VE BEEN AWAY. I FEAR IT MAY BE A **SHOCK** TO YOU.

HER WORDS CAUSED MY MIND TO REEL BACK TO THE BLIND BEGGAR. A SUDDEN **COLD** TRAVERSED MY BACK. BUT THIS WAS **FOOLISHNESS**... I WAS AGAIN WITH MY WIFE, IN MY OWN HOUSE...

THE **PLAGUE!** SOME OF OUR SERVANTS **DIED!** OTHERS LEFT US! I SENT OUR SONS **AWAY**... TO STUDY IN THE COURT.

WHAT COULD POSSIBLY...



NOW WE HAVE ONLY **TWO** SERVANTS. YET NOBODY IS MORE FAITHFUL, MORE TRUST-WORTHY THAN **THEY**.

THEY BOTH HAIL FROM A FAR OFF LAND WITH MANY STRANGE CUSTOMS. BUT THEY HAVE TAUGHT ME **MUCH** SINCE THEIR ARRIVAL.

COME, I WILL INTRODUCE YOU TO THEM.

ALREADY MY DREAMS OF A REUNION WITH MY FAMILY WERE BECOMING **UNRAVELED**. THERE WERE CHANGES HERE... MANY WHICH WERE NOT APPARENT AT FIRST. BUT TO WHAT EXTENT...?

MIGUEL... JOSELINE... THIS IS OUR LORD, MY **HUSBAND**, DON FERNANDEZ.

WE HAVE WAITED LONG, SIRE...

AS THEY BADE ME THE FORMALITIES, I COULD NOT AVOID NOTICING A STRANGE LOOK UPON THEIR FACES...

...BLANK, LIFELESS **STARES!** THEIR EYES WERE **COLD** CRYSTAL ORBS! COLD AND **MERCILESS..!**

WHAT HAS HAPPENED
IN THIS HOUSE THAT I SHOULD
FEEL SO *STRANGE* IN FRONT OF MY
OWN *WIFE*? AND THESE SERVANTS...
SO *SILENT*! EVEN THE *DOGS* ARE
QUIET. I HEAR NO NOISE AT *ALL*!

SO MUCH
HAS *CHANGED*.
SO VERY MUCH.

A TOAST, DEAR
HUSBAND. LET US
DRINK TO YOUR SAFE
AND HAPPY
RETURN.

DRINK UP,
MY DEAR.

ANOTHER
MYSTERY! I HAVE
NEVER KNOWN
MARIE TO
DRINK.

IT WAS AN AGED
WINE FROM OUR OWN
CELLAR. IT WAS
STRONG, BUT WITH
A *STRANGE* AND
BITTER TASTE I DID
NOT RECALL.

I BIT DOWN AND
DRANK IT *ALL*...

THEN FOR THE FIRST
TIME IN SO VERY LONG...
I FELT A *DESIRE* FOR
MY *WIFE*. THE DINNER.
THE WINE. THE HEAT
FROM THE FIRE... I
FELT BLOOD BOIL
IN MY VEINS...

SO LONG I HAD
WAITED TO *KISS*
HER... TO AGAIN
CARESS HER
SOFT FLESH...

MARIE, MY
LOVE, YOU ARE
AS *BEAUTIFUL* AS
THE DAY I MET YOU.
YOU ARE MORE
THAN ANY MAN
DESERVES...

WE EMBRACED...
TIGHTLY.
PASSIONATELY...
HER LIPS
PURSED AND I
MET THEM
WITH MINE...



IT WAS A LONG KISS... I FELT AS IF MY WHOLE LIFE HAD GONE INTO IT. I BECAME WEAK... DROWSY... EVERYTHING *VANISHED* AROUND ME. I WAS ENTERING INTO A THICK... AND RED... FO...



I SWIRLED... TOSSED FROM SIDE TO SIDE ADMIDST THE WAVES OF *BLACKNESS* THAT HELD ME... AND I *FELL!* GREAT MONSTERS BATTERED MY BROKEN BODY... TEARING OFF MY LIMBS... THEN I *WOKE!*

MY GOD! WHAT HAS HAPPENED...? WAS I SLEEPING? THE *WINE*... IT TASTED OF *GROG*...! BUT... MY OWN *WIFE*? SHE WOULDN'T...



YET... IS IT POSSIBLE...? HAVE I BEEN MADE A FOOL OF ALL THIS *TIME*...? PERHAPS...



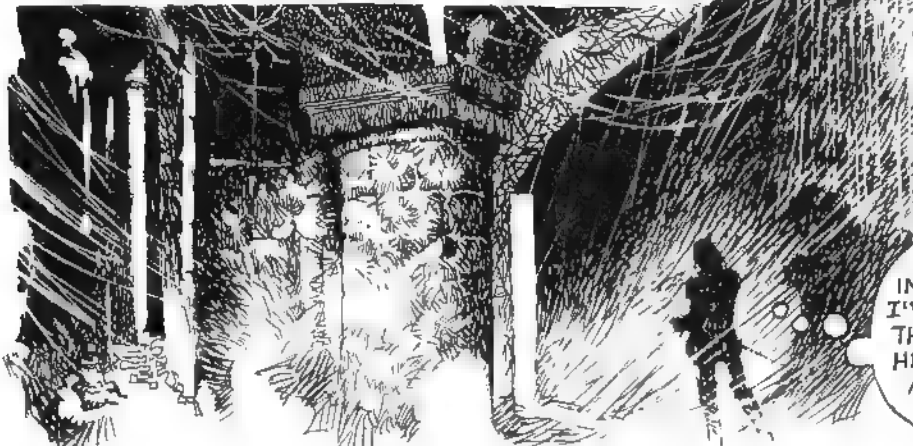
ANOTHER MAN! WHY DIDN'T I THINK OF THAT BEFORE...? NEW SERVANTS... OUR SONS FAR FROM HERE... AND SUDDENLY I APPEAR... TO DISTURB... THE ADULTRESS! GOD!!



I'LL FIND THEM... AND WITH MY *SWORD*, I WILL SHOW THEM I AM NOBODY'S BUMPKIN'!



A TORCHLIGHT IN THE BASEMENT! I'VE *DISCOVERED* THEM! OH LORD... HELP ME! SEE THAT MY HAND DOES NOT *SHAKE!*



I STARTED HAPHAZARDLY TOWARD THE DOOR... BUT HEARING THE VOICES WITHIN... I STOPPED..!

WE MUST **KILL** HIM! HE IS TOO CLEVER. SOON THE WHISPERS FROM THE VILLAGERS WILL REACH HIM AND HE WILL FIND OUT THE **TRUTH!**

I FEAR YOU'RE **RIGHT!**

WE MUST **KILL HIM TONIGHT!** THE VEHICLE IS READY SO WE CAN **ESCAPE**

I DID NOT UNDERSTAND CERTAIN THINGS BUT I DID UNDERSTAND ENOUGH! I ENTERED... AND WHAT I SAW IS THE **TRUTH, I SWEAR, GENTLEMEN!**

DEMONS! DEVOURING A DEAD MAN! WHAT DEATH IS GOD SENDING ME?

DON FERNANDEZ?

THE DRUG MUST HAVE **FAILED...**

M... MY HUSBAND... **NO!**

I KNEW INSTANTLY WHAT I MUST DO!

THIS MADNESS MUST BE ENDED! TO **HELL** WITH YOU, WOMAN!

WITH ONE SPEEDY BLOW, I **SLICED** THE SERVANT **JOSELINE...**

AND MY **MARIE BEGGED** FOR HER **LIFE!**

MY HUSBAND... **NO! YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND...**

BUT I WAS BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND **EVERYTHING.** THE WAR HAD BROUGHT **PLAGUE... FAMINE... STARVATION!** AND IT HAD AFFECTED THE **MINDS** OF THOSE IN MY HOUSEHOLD! I WAS BEGINNING TO SEE WHAT HAD TRULY BECOME OF MY MISSING **SONS...** AND ONCE AGAIN, MY **SWORD WAS UNSHEATHED** IN THE NAME OF GOD AND MY KING!

IT WAS AS THOUGH I WAS IN
FIERCE BATTLE AGAIN! YET
NO HOLIER CAUSE HAD I
EVER UNDERTAKEN... NO
MORE GHASTLY A FOE...

AGAIN AND
AGAIN I
THRUST INTO
THE "MAN-
SERVANT'S"
DAMNED
FLESH...
UNTIL
FINALLY

...HE DROPPED INTO A
POOL OF HIS OWN BLOOD...



BUT WHILE MY EYE LIN-
GERED ON THE DISGUSTING
SIGHT BEFORE ME, MARIE,
THE BEAUTIFUL WIFE I HAD
LONGED FOR FOR SO MANY
YEARS... RAN...!

SHE DID
NOT WANT
TO TASTE
THE
BLADE
AS THE
SERVANT
HAD!

AND IN TRUTH, I KNEW
THAT DESPITE WHAT
I HAD SEEN... IT
WOULD BE A HARD
TASK FOR ME... TO
TAKE MY BELOVED
MARIE'S LIFE.

YOU HAVE
NOWHERE TO
RUN, MARIE!
COME TO ME...
SO I MAY DO
WHAT I
MUST!



FALLING BESIDE THE CORPSE
HE HAD HALF-EATEN, THE
CORPSE OF WHAT HAD ONCE
BEEN A MAN!

I RAN AFTER HER... SO
ENGROSSSED IN MY OWN
FEELINGS, THAT I DID NOT
SEE THE FALLEN CANDLE...

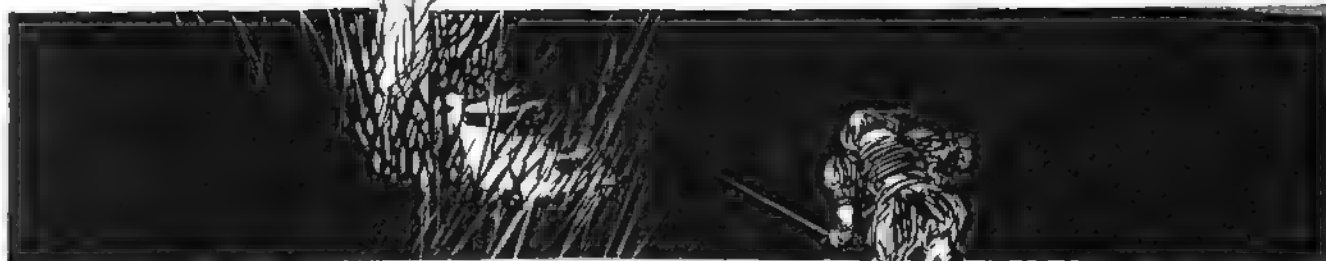


AS I RACED THROUGH THE
NIGHT AFTER MY ONCE-
BELOVED WIFE, I WAS ONLY
DIMLY AWARE OF THE
INFERNO BEHIND ME

STOP, MARIE!
FLEEING WILL NOT
HELP...!

...MY HOUSE!





INTO THE FOREST SHE FLED! THE TREES CLOSED AROUND HER... AND IN THE DARKNESS, I COULD NO LONGER SEE MY BELOVED MAN-EATING WIFE.



BUT STILL I PRESSED FORWARD FOR I KNEW WHAT MUST BE DONE... FOR WITH MARIE FREE, THERE WAS NO TELLING HOW MANY SUBJECTS OF THE CROWN WOULD END UP LINING HER STOMACH! ALL OF SPAIN WOULD BECOME THE VERMIN'S PLAYGROUND.

I WILL FIND YOU IN THESE WOODS, MARIE! IF I HAD A THOUSAND LIVES, I WOULD SPEND ALL OF THEM LOOKING FOR YOU!



THEN I HEARD IT... THE DIN... THE DEAFENING ROAR!



WHAT IS THAT MONSTROUS GROWLING...? A DRAGON...?

AND I KNEW INSTINCTIVELY THAT MARIE WAS GONE! WHATEVER THAT GROWLING BEFORE ME WAS... SHE HAD RUN RIGHT INTO IT!



THE BEAST MUST HAVE DEVoured HER...!

I RACED INTO A CLEARING, SABRE IN HAND! AND THERE BEFORE ME WAS A GREAT FLAMING DRAGON! IT WAS A MONSTROUS THING... WITH ONE BIG EYE GROWLING FIERCELY, IT TOOK WING AND FLED TOWARD THE SKY.



I HAD FRIGHTENED IT AWAY.

PANTING, DON FERNANDEZ, LORD OF THE VILLAGES OF CAZORIA, AND RETIRED CAPTAIN OF ITS TERRITORIES, ALMOST BABBLLED FORTH HIS LAST PHRASES...



I ONLY WISH TO ADD THAT MY ACTS WERE GUIDED BY FAITH AND HONOR FOR MY KING. I DID WHAT I DID FOR SPAIN.

THE TRIBUNAL'S JUDGMENT WILL BE *WITHOUT* APPEAL, DON FERNANDEZ!

I AWAIT YOUR VERDICT, HONORABLE JURISTS.

I BESEECH YOU TO PRAY, BROTHERS... THAT GOD ENLIGHTENS YOU WITH THE RIGHT VERDICT!



GUILTY.

SI.

GUILTY.

GUILTY.

GUILTY.

GUILTY.

THE VERDICT IS UNANIMOUS, DON FERNANDEZ! YOU HAVE NO PROOF... ONLY YOUR WORD TO PRESENT THIS JURY..! THIS IS NOT ENOUGH..!

THIS TRIBUNAL WOULD HAVE PREFERRED THE SIMPLE TRUTH... A VULGAR ADULTERY CASE! WE COULD EVEN HAVE ACCEPTED THE FACT YOU MURDERED YOUR WIFE AND HER LOVER... BURNING THEIR BODIES WHEN YOU SET TORCH TO YOUR OWN HOME!

BUT WISHING TO SWINDLE US WITH VULGAR STORIES THAT INSULT THE INTELLIGENCE OF THIS COURT IS A CRIME WHICH CANNOT BE FORGIVEN! THERE CAN ONLY BE ONE PUNISHMENT FOR DON FERNANDEZ..!

SEND HIM TO THE BON-FIRE!!

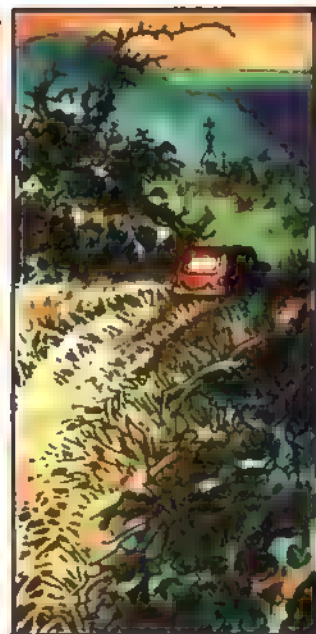
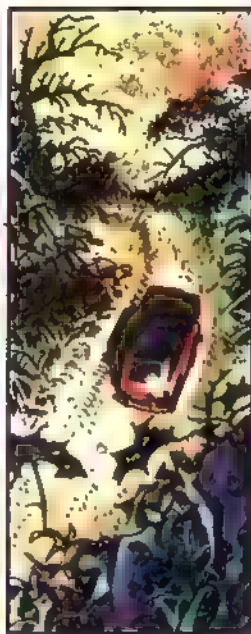
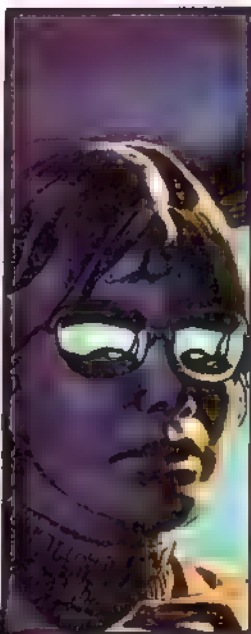
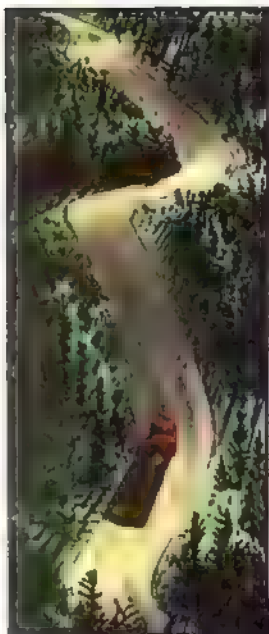
IT IS THE TRUTH!

THE TRUTH...

THE TRUTH...

NOOO!

NO... I SWEAR IT...



IT'S A LONG WAY FROM THE FILTH-STREWN STREETS OF MANHATTAN TO THE ROCKY SHORES OF NEW ENGLAND. BUT WHEN **KARNA WOODLIK** HEARD OF HER MOTHER'S ILLNESS, SHE RACED NON-STOP TO THE HOME SHE HAD LOVED AND LEFT ON THE **MAINE** SHORELINE!

KARNA WOODLIK ARRIVED JUST IN TIME TO SEE HER MOTHER'S **PINE BOX** LOWERED INTO THE EARTH!

THE WOODLIK INHERITANCE!



SHE WAS A GOOD WOMAN, SATELY, COULDN'T YOU FIND SOMETHING BETTER THAN THAT CRATE TO BURY HER IN?

POOR MA!



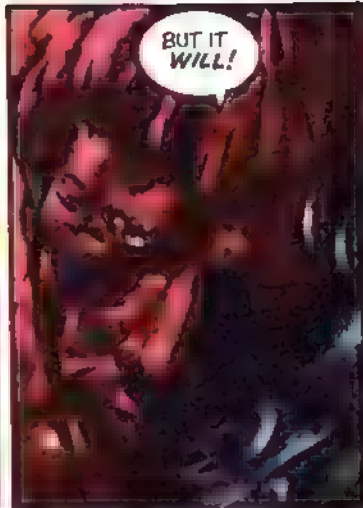
THAT'S MIGHTY **UPPITY** TALK FOR SOMEONE WHO **RUN OFF** TO THE CITY. I COULDN'T **AFFORD** ANYTHIN' ELSE!

LET'S GO TO THE HOUSE, SATELY! WE HAVE SOME TALK-ING TO DO!



WHY THE **TOWN CEMETARY** INSTEAD OF OUR **HOME GRAVE YARD**?

HEH HEH! THAT WAS MA'S DYIN' WISH. SHE HOPED IT WOULDN'T GET 'ER THERE.



BUT IT **WILL!**

THE ANCIENT WOODLICK HOUSE SAT **ROTTING AWAY**... DANGEROUSLY NEAR **JAGGED CLIFFS** THAT OVERLOOKED THE EVER PRESENT **SEA**. **THUNDEROUS GRINDING WAVES** WERE A CONSTANT REMINDER THAT THE OLD HOUSE WOULD SOMEDAY COME TO REST ON THE ROCKS FAR BELOW...



HAVE YOU BEEN **DRINKING** AGAIN? YOU DON'T MAKE SENSE

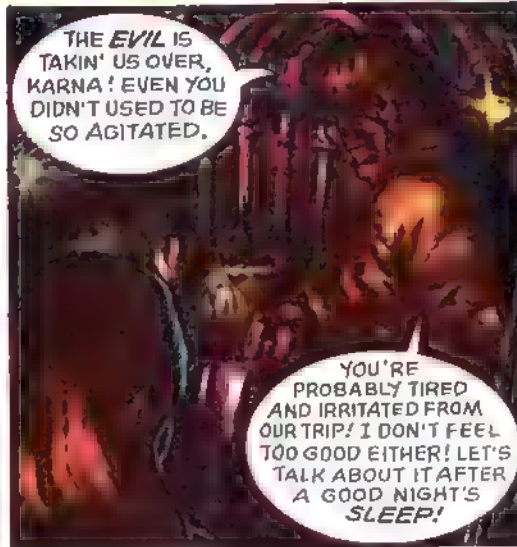
YEH! I BEEN **DRINKIN'** ALL RIGHT. YOU'LL DRINK, TOO, WHEN YA **FIND OUT**.



SLAP!



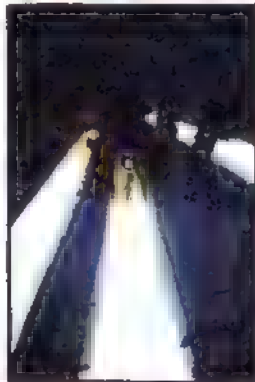
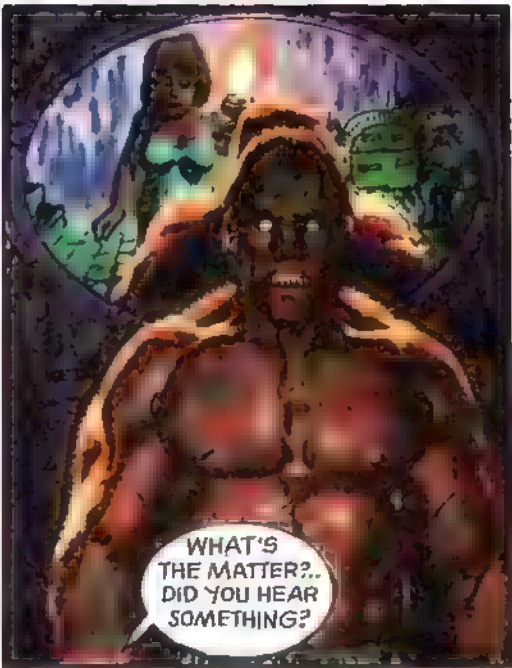
NO MORE **RIDDLES, YOU FOOL!** MA'S LAST LETTERS TO ME HINTED AT SOME **HORROR**. HER **FEARS** KILLED HER. **NOW** TELL ME **WHAT'S GOING ON!**



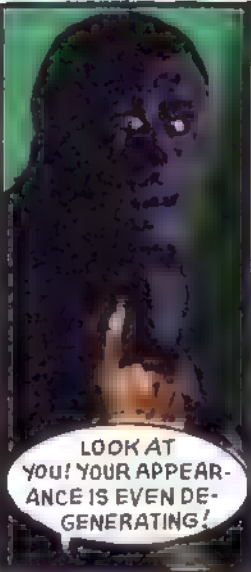
THE **EVIL** IS TAKIN' US OVER, KARNA! EVEN YOU DIDN'T USED TO BE SO AGITATED.

YOU'RE PROBABLY TIRED AND IRRITATED FROM OUR TRIP! I DON'T FEEL TOO GOOD EITHER! LET'S TALK ABOUT IT AFTER A GOOD NIGHT'S **SLEEP!**

AN OVERPOWERING *GLOOM* CHOKED THIS LAND. WITHOUT DINNER, THE WOODLIKS RETIRED, HOPING TO EFFLY ESCAPE THEIR DREARY WORLD...THEN IN THE *DARK*, SOMETHING *TOUCHED* KARMA.



IT HAS TO DO WITH *UNSOLVED CASES*. DO YOU REMEMBER JODEY KRAFTER'S DISAPPEARANCE? THEM MUTILATED BODIES THEY FIND SOMETIMES?



LOOK AT YOU! YOUR APPEARANCE IS EVEN DEGENERATING!

I... CHOKED... ATE IT.

UNGH!
YOU'RE **DIS-**
GUSTING!

DO YOU THINK
I'M **MAD?** YOU THINK
I'M MAKING THIS ALL
UP? COME, I'LL
SHOW YOU!

WITH GROWING
ANXIETY, SATELY
CHATTERED ON
AS KARNA
FOLLOWED HIM
INTO THE SUB-
CELLAR.

SUDDENLY, HE
STOPPED AND
STOOD SILENT
LISTENING.

WHAT
IS IT?

QUIET!

THEN, AFTER
A MOMENT, A
FAINT, EVER-SO-
SLIGHT
TREMBLING
WHISPERED
FROM THE
WALLS, THE
FLOOR.

OR DID THEY
IMAGINE IT?


MOTHER
EARTH **SHIVERS!**
SHE **HATES** THE **VER-**
MIN SCAMPERING
THROUGH THE TUNNELS
THAT **HONEYCOMB**
HER BREAST.

IT'S WHAT
WOKE ME!

LOOK!
THERE IS A
CAVERN BELOW.
THERE YOU'LL
FIND YOUR
PROOF!

MONTHS AGO
I HEARD **NOISES!**
I SEARCHED, AND
FOUND THIS
HOLE.

SEE THE
BONES, KARNA?
LOOK THERE...**TUNNELS!**
DEVIL KNOWS WHERE
THEY LEAD.



DON'T
YOU UNDER-
STAND? THIS
IS WHERE
PA LIVES!

SHOCK
AFTER SHOCK
BOMBARDED
THE GIRL AS
CHILDHOOD
MYSTERIES
BEGAN TO FALL
HORRIBLY IN-
TO PLACE.
SHE SAT
FRANCELIKE
AS SATELY
CONTINUED.

SHE COULDN'T
LOOK AWAY
FROM HIS LARGE
CANINE
TEETH.

THE WOODLIKS
ARE DAMNED
FOREVER!

YET...YOU,
MY SISTER, SEEM
UNTOUCHED BY THE
CURSE. YOU CAN HELP
ME RID THE WORLD OF
THE EVIL FILTH OF
THE WOODLIKS. I
HAVE A PLAN.

I HAVE
A HUNCH THE
MONSTER THAT
SPAWNED US WILL
COME HERE TONIGHT.
WE MUST **KILL** IT
AND **BURN** WOOD-
LIK HOUSE!

PROMISE
ME, KARNA,
THAT YOU'LL
BURN THE
PLACE IF I
FAIL.

WAIT! I
HEARD SOME-
THING!

A FOUL, LOATHSOME ODOR FLOODED THE CAVE, ANNOUNCING THE DISGUSTING PRESENCE OF THE **GHOUL** OF THE WOODLIKS! IT ENTERED, CARRYING ITS **FOOD**. KARNA AND SATELY'S MOTHER!

GRRR!

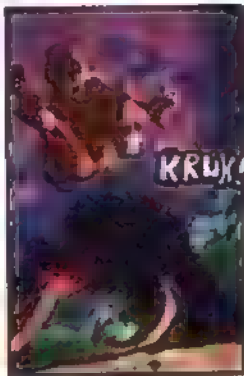
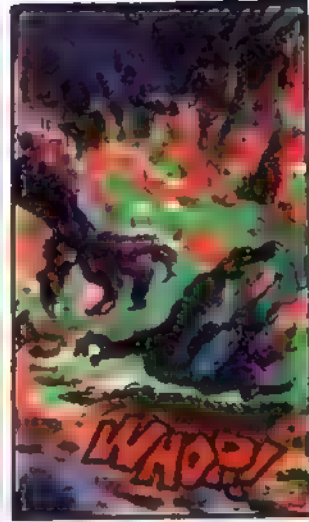
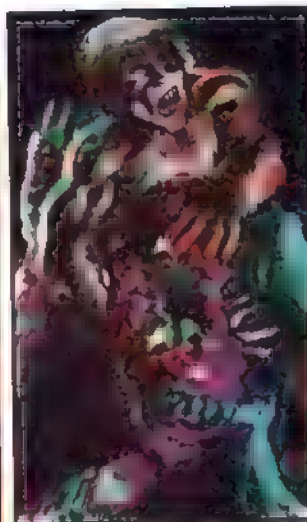
PA!

MA!

FATHER AND SON LEAPED AT EACH OTHER!
NOT FROM LOVE BUT WITH **BLOODLUST!**



THE **BEAST** WAS TOO **STRONG!** SATELY GRABBED A **ROCK.**



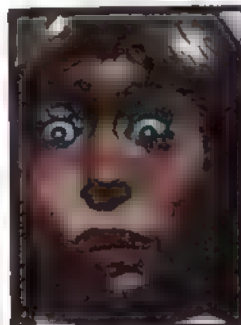
SATELY'S **LIFEBLOOD** GURGLD ONTO THE CAVE FLOOR!
THE FIEND TURNED TOWARD KARNA... ITS SKULL
CRUSHED! THE MONSTER STAGGERED **FORWARD...**



... AND BASHED HIS
FATHER'S HIDEOUS
SKULL! BUT THE
MONSTROUS
JAWS CLAMPED
ABOUT
SATELY'S
THROAT...
AND
RIPPED..!

SHE STOOD
MOTIONLESS...
FROZEN...

THEN THE HULK TOTTERED
AND **FELL...** INTO A
QUIVERING **HEAP.**



... HER SENSES
NUMBED IN
HORROR!



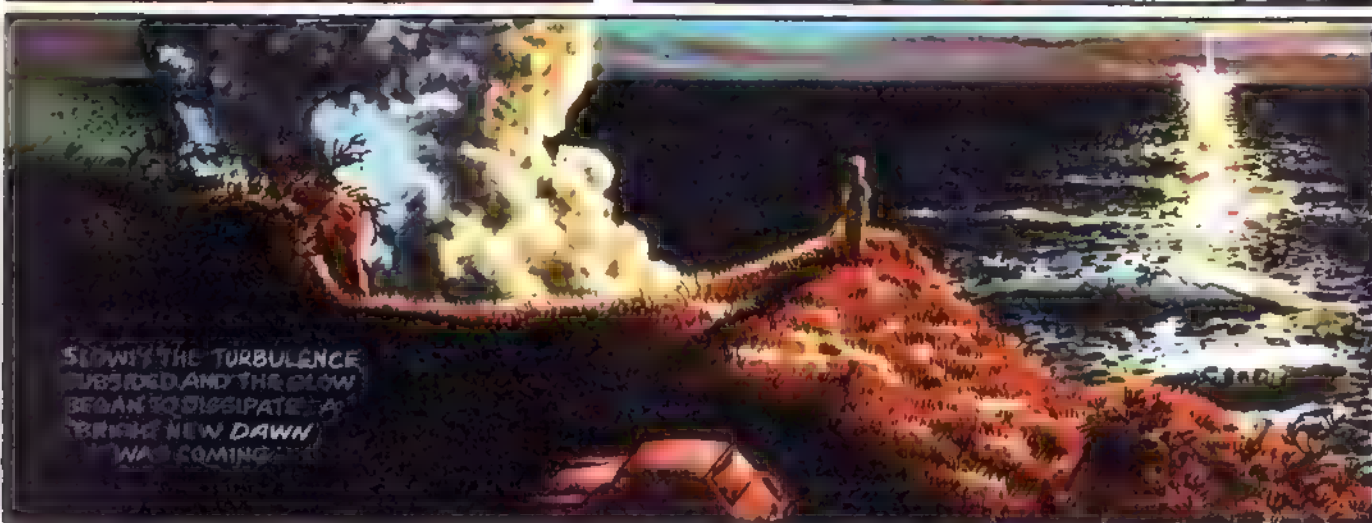
A SOLITARY SPECTATOR STOOD MESMERIZED, WATCHING QUIETLY AS BLAZING **FIRELIGHT** PLAYED ACROSS HER BODY.



WOODLIK HOUSE **WASHED** ITSELF IN AN ABSOLUTION OF **FLAME**...SETTING THE VERY HEAVENS AGLOW.



BUT FIRE WAS NOT ENOUGH. THE GROUND **SHRUGGED**, AMPUTATING THE OFFENSIVE, SCABROUS LIMB.

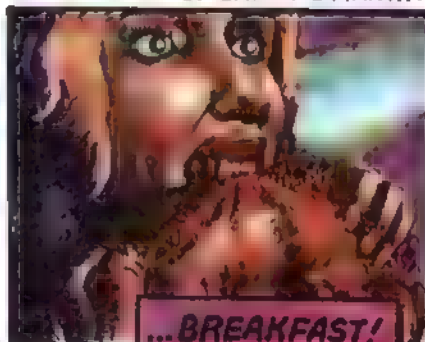


SLOWLY THE TURBULENCE SUBSIDED AND THE GLOW BEGAN TO DISSIPATE. A **BRIGHT NEW DAWN** WAS COMING.

IT WAS TIME FOR **HOPE** AND A NEW BEGINNING. KARNA'S EYES SPARKLED AS SHE SMILED.

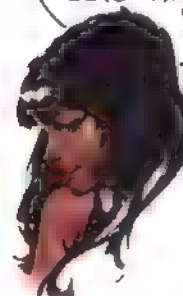


SHE PICKED UP SATELY'S ARM...



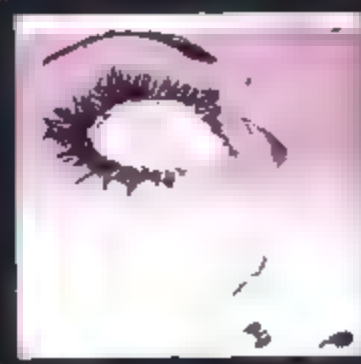
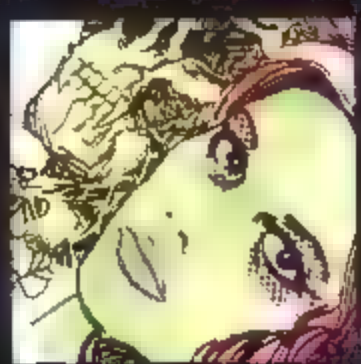
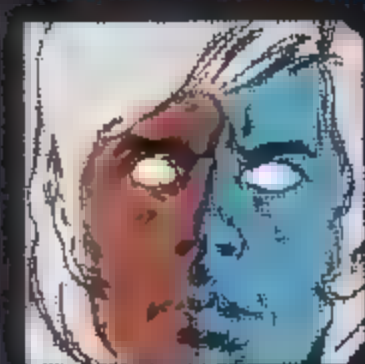
...**BREAKFAST!**

ANOTHER HAPPY ENDING! THE WOODLIKS WILL ALL BE **TOGETHER** AGAIN...WHEN KARNA GETS **THROUGH** WITH THEM!



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Prologue:

THE MEN FOLK OF ROCK COUNTY ARE GOOD PEOPLE, **HEARTY** PEOPLE! FISHERMEN... ALL OF 'EM! THEY WORK HARD FOR THE MEAGER LIVING THEY'RE ABLE TO PULL FROM THE SEA, AND THEY'RE AIN'T **NOTHIN'** THEY ENJOY BETTER'N A FEW DRINKS AN' A 'JAWIN' SESSION DOWN AT BARNEY'S AFTER A LONG DAY.

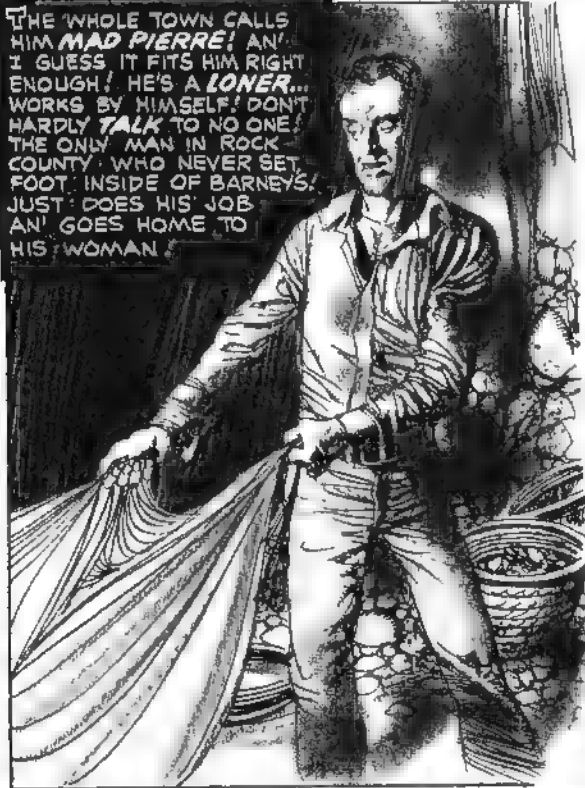


YA HEAR LOTS OF WILD STORIES DOWN AT BARNEY'S. MOST OF 'EM ARE PURE **JOSHIN'**. THAT'S THE WAY THE MEN FOLK HAVE THEIR FUN. EACH TRIES TO OUT-**LIE** THE OTHER!

BUT I GOT A STORY THAT'S **GOSPEL TRUTH!** I LIKE TO TELL IT TO STRANGERS, COURSE, NO ONE BELIEVES IT, EVEN THOUGH ALL THE MEN SWEAR IT'S **TRUE!**

IT'S THE STORY OF **PIERRE LANGLOIS.**

THE WHOLE TOWN CALLS HIM **MAD PIERRE!** AN' I GUESS IT FITS HIM RIGHT ENOUGH! HE'S A **LONER...** WORKS BY HIMSELF! DON'T HARDLY **TALK** TO NO ONE! THE ONLY MAN IN ROCK COUNTY WHO NEVER SET FOOT INSIDE OF BARNEY'S. JUST DOES HIS JOB AN' GOES HOME TO HIS WOMAN.

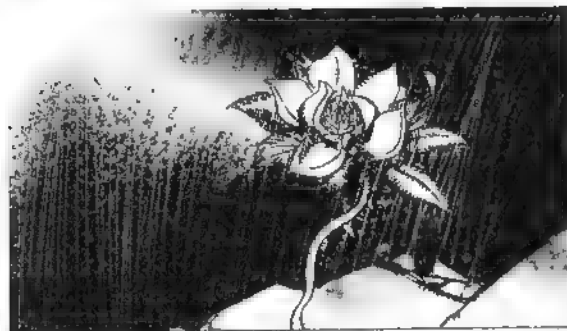


NO ONE REALLY KNOWS WHERE **MAD PIERRE** CAME FROM. ONE DAY, ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO, HE JUST WANDERED INTO ROCK COUNTY, AN' HE'S BEEN HERE EVER SINCE! 'BOUT THE **ONLY** THING PEOPLE IN THESE PARTS KNOW FOR **SURE** ABOUT PIERRE IS HIS **FEAR!**



IT'S A SIGHT FOR THEM'S THAT SEEN IT! PIERRE'LL STUMBLE ACROSS SOME FORM OF PLANT LIFE, AND COME TO A STARK - STANDSTILL. SHEER TERROR GLAZES HIS FACE... YOU CAN TELL THE MAN'S SUFFERIN' THE TORMENTS OF HELL...

THE MAN'S SCARED TO DEATH OF **FLOWERS!** THAT'S WHY WE CALL 'IM **MAD PIERRE!**



THE STRANGE, INCUREABLE PHOBIA...

YOU CAN ALMOST
SEE THE WHEELS IN
OL' PIERRE'S HEAD
CHURNIN' AS HE
STANDS THERE FROZEN
IN **FEAR** BEFORE
ONE O' GOD'S MOST
BEAUTIFUL CREATIONS.

HE WON'T MOVE
FOR NARY A MINUTE
...FIGURIN' SCHEMIN'
ON WHAT TO **DO**...
HOW TO GET **AWAY**
FROM THE **PLANTS**...



...OF MAD PIERRE! LANGLOIS!

THEN, REAL SUDDEN-LIKE
AND WITH THE CRAZIEST
GLEAM YOU EVER SAW IN
A MAN'S EYE... OLD WEIRD
PIERRE'LL GO **STARK**,
RAVING MAD!!



HE'LL **POUNCE**
ON THE FLOWER
AND START
RIPPING IT
APART WITH
AN INSANE
VENGEANCE!

AND NOT UNTIL THE FLOWER IS A **DEAD MASS**
OF TORN PETALS AT HIS FEET WILL PIERRE
FINALLY COME OUT OF HIS TRANCE...



...LONG ENOUGH TO **CREMATE** ANY SEMBLANCE OF
LIFE LEFT IN THAT PLANT.

DAMNED
FLOWERS!
YOU'LL
CURSE ME
NO LONGER!



REMEMBER THE DAY OL' **MAD PIERRE** SET FIRE TO THE ROCK COUNTY WOODS. MAYBE HE GOT A LITTLE CARELESS WHEN HE WAS CREMATIN' ONE OF HIS FLOWERS... OR MAYBE HE BURNED ALL THEM TREES ON **PURPOSE**.



FOLKS IN THESE PARTS DIDN'T TAKE KINDLY TO PIERRE **BURNIN'** UP THEIR TREES. BUT THEY SHRUGGED IT OFF BECAUSE OF PIERRE'S **WIFE!**

BESIDES... MARGARET WAS **EXPECTIN'** AT THE TIME. AND IF WE'D A **LOCKED PIERRE UP** JUST 'CAUSE HE WAS CARELESS WITH HIS MATCHES, IT WOULD'A DEPRIVED MARGARET'S BABY OF **MAIN** A FATHER...

EVEN IF THAT FATHER WAS OLD **MAD PIERRE!**



JUST ABOUT EVERYBODY **LOVES** AND RESPECTS THAT WOMAN. SHE'S BEEN A GOOD NEIGHBOR. AND I GUESS WE ALL FIGURED THAT IF SOMEONE AS GOOD AS MARGARET COULD PUT UP WITH PIERRE... WELL, THEN COULDN'T WE **ALL?**



HE DIDN'T REALLY COME INTO THE ACT UNTIL THE DAY THAT BABY DECIDED HE WANTED TO SEE THE **WORLD**...



AND EVEN **THEN**, PIERRE WOULDN'T LET ME TOUCH HIS **WIFE!**

PIERRE WAS **NERVOUS**... JITTERY! AND I THOUGHT I DETECTED A CERTAIN APPREHENSION IN HIM. LIKE... LIKE MAYBE HE DIDN'T WANT THIS **BABY!**



Ooow!
IT'S **TIME**,
PIERRE! GO
FETCH **DOC**
ADAMS!
HURRY!

HE MADE ME STAND THERE LISTENIN' TO HIS STORY...WHILE HIS WIFE WAS IN THE NEXT ROOM SCREAMIN' FROM THE LABOR PAINS!

PIERRE TOLD ME OF HIS CHILDHOOD. HOW, AS A BOY, HE HAD LIVED ON A GREAT FLOREALED ESTATE!



HE TOLD ME OF A MOTHER HE NEVER KNEW...AND OF A STEP-MOTHER HE WANTED TO KNOW! A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN NAMED MARIE, WHOM HIS FATHER HAD MARRIED WHEN PIERRE'S MOTHER DIED!



BUT MARIE WAS **INDIFFERENT** TO PIERRE. SHE SHOWED MORE AFFECTION FOR THE FLOWERS WITH WHICH SHE SURROUNDED HERSELF...AT A TIME WHEN PIERRE NEEDED AFFECTION...

AND PIERRE'S FATHER AND UNCLES WERE NO BETTER! TO THEM, MARIE AND HER FLOWERS WERE **BEAUTIFUL!** PIERRE...NOTHING MORE THAN A CHILDSOME **NUISANCE!**



BECAUSE THEY WERE **BLIND-**ED BY MARIE'S BEAUTY, PIERRE'S FATHER AND UNCLES DID NOT SEE WHAT MARIE **REALLY** WAS. PIERRE WAS THE FIRST TO KNOW THAT MARIE WAS A **WITCH...!** A **FLOWER WITCH!**

WITH HIS KNOWLEDGE PIERRE BEGAN **HIDING** FROM MARIE. HE KNEW THAT IF SHE LEARNED PIERRE HAD FOUND HER OUT... SHE WOULD PUT A **WITCH'S CURSE** ON HIM!



SO PIERRE SPENT HIS TIME IN A DARKENED CELLAR BROODING... **HIDING!**

...WHILE HIS NEW MOTHER, **THE WITCH**, LANGUIshed IN THE LUXURY OF PIERRE'S FATHER'S **WEALTH!**



BUT LITTLE BOYS CAN'T STAY IN CELLARS FOREVER. ALONE WITH HIS THOUGHTS, PIERRE BEGAN DOUBTING... MAYBE MARIE WASN'T A WITCH AT ALL! HE WENT TO HER... LOOKING FOR AFFECTION... UNDERSTANDING...



...AND IT WAS THEN THAT MARIE CURSED HIM!*

YOU ARE SPITEFUL AND SPOILED, PIERRE! YOU WANT ATTENTION WHEN YOU DESERVE NONE!

YOU SEEK TO DISTRACT ME FROM MY FLOWERS...

...AND MY FLOWERS DO NOT LIKE THAT!



...AND WITH THAT, PIERRE'S STEPMOTHER WENT ABOUT HER LIFE AS BEFORE... BESTOWING ALL HER AFFECTION ON HER FLOWERS... SAVING NONE FOR POOR LITTLE PIERRE!



AND HE WAITED... WAITED FOR MARIE'S CURSE TO COME TRUE...!



HE FEARED ALL TYPES OF PLANT-LIFE... EXPECTING THEM TO TURN INTO HEINOUS MONSTERS... WAITING TO DEVOUR HIM... PIERRE BECAME PARANOID!

HE MOVED TO THE GRANITE-STREWN SHORES OF ROCK COUNTY, KNOWING OF THE LITTLE VEGETATION THAT IS ABLE TO GROW HERE. HERE HE MET AND MARRIED MARGARET... AND SHE CONVINCED HIM THAT HE SHOULD HAVE A CHILD...!

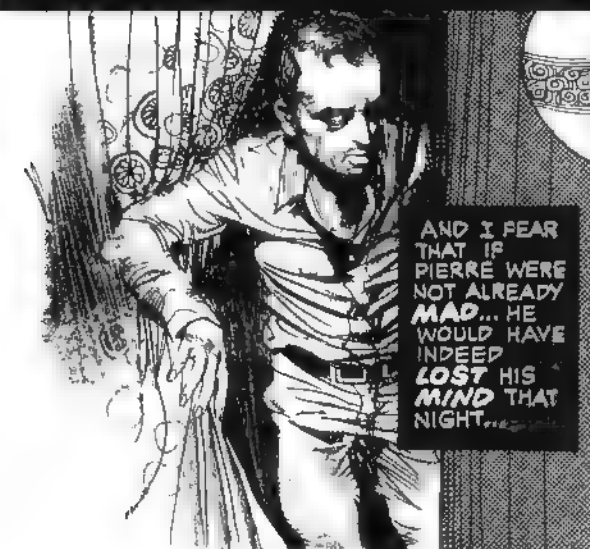
AND NOW, PIERRE TOLD ME HOW HE FEARS FOR HIS CHILD'S LIFE... BECAUSE OF THE CURSE...!



AND THEN HE HEARD THE CRIES OF HIS NEW-BORN SON! WHEN I EMERGED, I FEAR IT WAS WHO WAS IN MORE SHOCK THAN POOR PIERRE...



BUT PIERRE DIDN'T WAIT FOR MY EXPLANATION. HE KNEW SOMETHING WAS **WRONG**... TERRIBLY **WRONG** ...AND HE RAN TO HIS WIFE AND NEWBORN CHILD.



THEY NAMED HIM **BUD!**
AND IN TRUTH, HE WAS
JUST A LITTLE **SPROUT!**

IT TOOK PIERRE AWHILE
TO GET **USED** TO THE
WAY HIS BOUNCING BABY
BOY **LOOKED...**

...TOOK HIM
AWHILE TO
UNDERSTAND
THAT **THIS**
WAS THE
CURSE HIS
STEPMOTHER
HAD INFLICTED
UPON HIM...

BUT TODAY,
PIERRE
IS ONE OF
THE MOST
DEVOUTED
FATHERS IN
ALL OF
ROCK
COUNTY!

PIERRE'S **STILL** A LONER! STILL
DOESN'T SWAP LIES WITH THE BOYS
DOWN AT BARNEY'S!

HE'S STILL SCARED TO **DEATH** OF
FLOWERS! ONLY DIFFERENCE IS,
HE DOESN'T DESTROY THEM NOW!

HE'S **OVER** THAT, THESE DAYS...!



JUST THE SAME,
WE **STILL** CALL
HIM **MAD PIERRE!**

SINCE HIS SON'S
BIRTH, HE'S BEEN
CRAZIER
THAN HELL!

Jose Bea

AFRICA MAY WELL BE THE **DARKEST** CONTINENT ETCHING EARTH'S VARIED SURFACE...



...BUT **NOWHERE** DOES THE SUN BEAT **BRIGHTER** OR **HOTTER** THAN UPON ITS LUSHLY EXOTIC LANDSCAPE... AS EVIDENCED BY THE SWELTERING DISCOMFORT OF A JUNGLE CONVOY...

...A **STRESS-WEARY** EXPEDITION WHICH DEFIES HEAT AND HOSTILE TERRAIN FOR **ONE** REASON ONLY...

...**ARCHEOLOGY**, ROBERTO. YOU'VE BEEN MY AIDE LONG ENOUGH TO REALIZE THE GEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ANCIENT ARTIFACTS WE'RE SEARCHING FOR.

YOU MEAN THE THEORY YOU ADVANCED IN YOUR LAST BOOK, MR. BARRETT...? THAT IF WE FIND ARTIFACTS HERE IN **AFRICA** WHICH CORRESPOND WITH THOSE UNEARTHED IN **EUROPE**, IT WILL PROVE THAT AFRICA AND EUROPE WERE ONCE **CONNECTED**...?

EXACTLY! I BELIEVE THEY SOMEHOW **SPLIT**... DRIFTED APART UNTIL AN ENTIRE **OCEAN** SEPARATED...

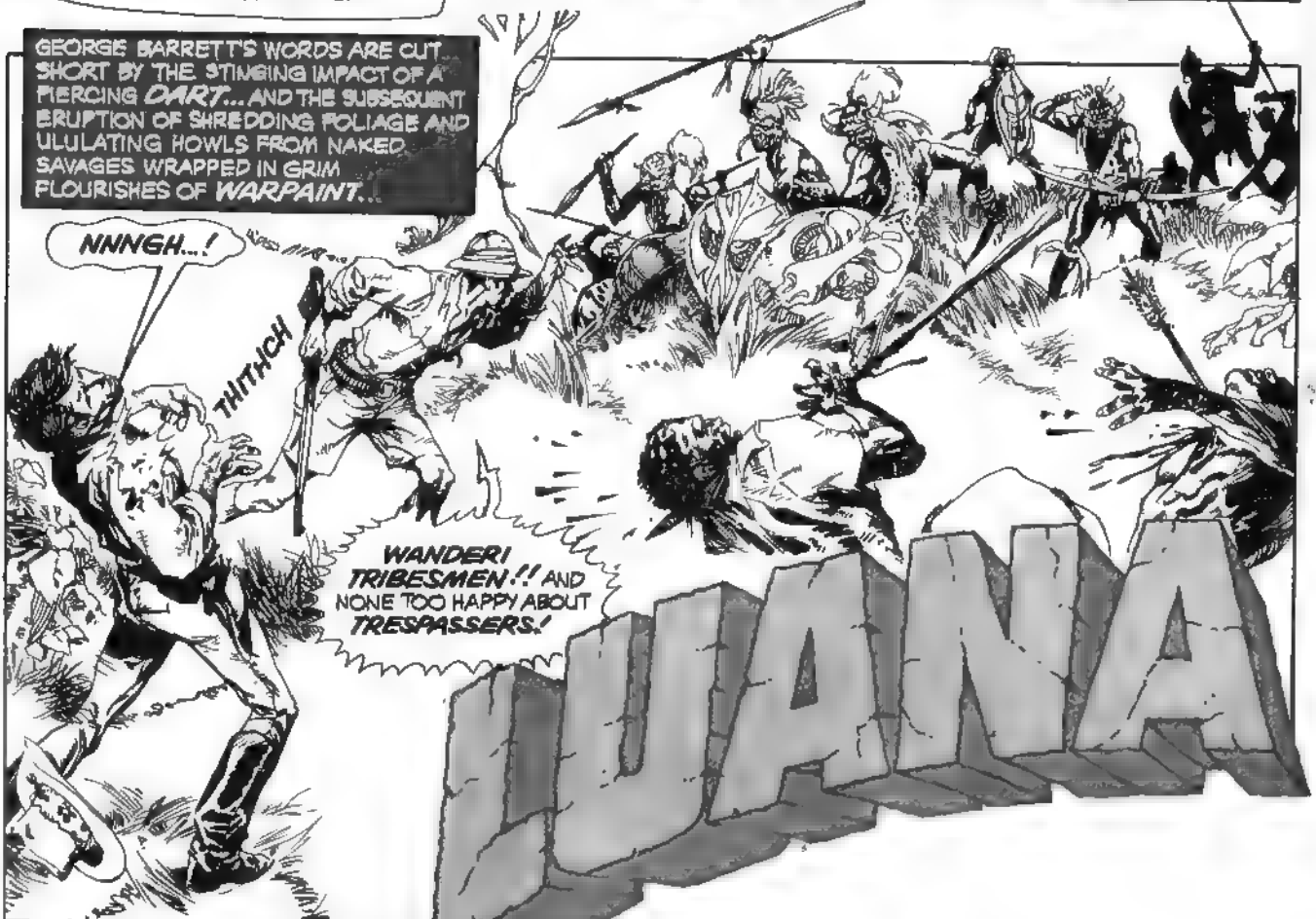


GEORGE BARRETT'S WORDS ARE CUT SHORT BY THE STINGING IMPACT OF A **PIERCING DART**... AND THE SUBSEQUENT ERUPTION OF SHREDDING FOLIAGE AND ULLULATING HOWLS FROM NAKED SAVAGES WRAPPED IN GRIM FLOURISHES OF **WARPAINT**...

NNNGH...!

THITCH

WANDER! **TRIBESMEN!!** AND NONE TOO HAPPY ABOUT **TRESPASSERS!**



THIS DART'S
POISONED,
ROBERTO! GET
OUT OF HERE
WHILE YOU
CAN...!

I CAN'T
LEAVE YOU
HERE TO...

I SAID GET
OUT OF HERE
...FAST!

KRAK

ONE FINAL LOOK INTO
BARRETT'S HARD EYES, AND
THE UNCERTAIN AIDE BOLTS
FROM THE CHAOTIC AMBUSH...

BLAM!

...HIS LAST BACKWARD
GLIMPSE A SICKENING
KALEIDOSCOPE OF DEATH
AS THE SAFARI'S LAST FEW
PORTERS FALL UNDER A
WITHERING RAIL OF SPEARS
AND VIRULENT BLOWGUN
DARTS...

THE SLAUGHTER IS
SWIFT, MERCILESS, AND
INEXORABLE...
LEAVING ONLY ONE
MAN STANDING...

PAIN...IN
MY SHOULDER...
DIZZY...

...AND THEN EVEN
GEORGE BARRETT
PITCHES TO HIS KNEES
THROUGH A QUEASY
VERTIGO OF MISTY
PAIN...

TO HIS **KNEES**, AND
TO THE **GROUND**
WHICH SEEMS TO SUCK
AT HIM LIKE A
GREEDY GRAVE...

A GRAVE IT MIGHT
AS WELL BE IF
THREE DEMON-
FACED SAVAGES ARE
PERMITTED BUT
SEVERAL SECONDS
MOMENTUM...

A MOMENTUM WHICH IS DESTINED TO BE
DENIED THEM BY A MOST UNEXPECTED
OCCURRENCE...

THE STREAKING BLUR OF GRACEFUL,
DYNAMIC FIGURE CLINGING TO A
BRANCH, SLICING A CLEAN ARC
THROUGH THE OPPRESSIVE JUNGLE
HEAT... **LUANA!**

THE ARC TERMINATES WITH
JARRING IMPACT...



...AND IS PUNCTUATED
BY THE INCREDULOUS
YELPS OF THREE
VIOLENTLY SCATTERED
WANDERER WARRIORS.

GEORGE BARRETT IS
CONVINCED HE IS Mired IN
**FEVER-FANTASY... IN
DREAM-DELIRIUM...**



...FOR HE HAS WITNESSED
THIS BEAUTIFUL GIRL
PLUMMET FROM THE SKIES
LIKE LIQUID LIGHTNING...
AND HE WATCHES NOW, AS
SHE DROPS TO THE GROUND
WITH A LITHE TWIST, SNATCHING
UP AN ABANDONED SPEAR IN
THE SAME SINUOUS MOVEMENT.

...AND HE WATCHES AS
THAT SPEAR PLUNGES
ONCE...



AND SLASHES DOWN
A SECOND BRUTAL
TIME...



...AND IS LEFT WHERE IT FALLS,
UNNEEDED A **THIRD TIME!**



THEN GEORGE BARRETT
WATCHES THIS STRANGE
JUNGLE GODDESS SLOWLY
PAD TOWARD HIM...
JOINED BY A DOCILE CHIMP
AND A SLINKING BLACK
PANTHER.

THE BRIEFLY-CLAD WOMAN
FOLDS HER SUPPLE BODY
INTO A CROUCH OVER GEORGE
BARRETT'S DWINDLING
CONSCIOUSNESS...



...AND HE DIMLY WATCHES
AND FEELS A BITTING
TWINGE, AS SHE
TENDERLY EXTRACTS THE
POISON-TIPPED **DART...**

...AND KNEADS THE MOISTURE
FROM A **LEAF** INTO HIS
POISON-POLLUTED WOUND...



IDLY, HIS HAZE-MUTED EYES FASTEN
ON A GOLDEN **BRACELET**... UNTIL
HE IS ALMOST **HYPNOTIZED** BY IT.

THEN THE GIRL POINTS TO HERSELF AND WHISPERS BUT A SINGLE ODD WORD...



...THAT, OR...



BUT DEAD MEN DO NOT OPEN THEIR EYES MERE HOURS LATER...



IN YOUR TENT, MR. BARRETT. I COULDN'T BRING MYSELF TO DESERT YOU...!

ROBERTO ...YOU'RE A GOOD MAN... BUT THE PORTERS...?

I CAME BACK TO HELP... AND FOUND YOU UNCONSCIOUS, BUT MIRACULOUSLY ALIVE.

MOST OF THEM... DEAD! THE OTHERS ARE DRESSING THEIR WOUNDS NOW... BUT WHY DID THE WANDER! LEAVE ANY SURVIVORS?



... WOULD BELIEVE THE EXPLANATION.



IN FACT, I'M NOT CERTAIN I BELIEVE IT MYSELF.

BUT ENOUGH OF THAT. LOOKS LIKE I WON'T BE WRITING MY BOOK AS SOON AS I'D HOPED TO. THIS EXPEDITION'S WASHED UP.

IT'S BACK TO NAIROBI IN THE MORNING... JUNGLE GODDESS OR NO JUNGLE GODDESS.

MORNING! A BATTERED, BEDRAGGLED CARAVAN LIMS ITS WAY THROUGH A MESSED SKIN OF NEARLY IMPENETRABLE JUNGLE... RETRACING ITS TRACKS TO NAIROBI...

LAST NIGHT YOU MUTTERED SOMETHING ABOUT A JUNGLE GODDESS...

IT WAS DELIRIUM, ROBERTO... NOTHING IMPOR...

LISTEN ISN'T THAT A PLANE...?

A PRIVATE PLANE... SKIMMING THOSE TREETOPS! DAMN CLOSE, TOO!

WONDER WHAT THEY'RE LOOKING FOR...

MR. BARRETT, ALL I KNOW IS WHAT I'LL BE LOOKING FOR WHEN WE REACH NAIROBI, AND THAT'S...

"...THE NEAREST COOL BAR."

I MUST CONFESS, MR. BARRETT, I HAD DOUBTS ABOUT EVER REACHING THIS PLACE.

WELL, DRINK UP AND ENJOY IT WHILE YOU CAN, ROBERTO. BECAUSE AS SOON AS WE CAN FORM ANOTHER SAFARI, WE'LL BE SETTING OUT IN SEARCH OF THOSE ARTIFACTS AGAIN.

I'M PREPARED TO PAY YOU A CONSIDERABLE SUM, MR. BARRETT, TO SEARCH FOR SOMETHING OTHER THAN ARTIFACTS.

AND JUST WHAT MIGHT THAT BE, MISS...?

WHILE YOU SEEM TO KNOW ME, I'M AFRAID I CAN'T QUITE RECALL YOUR NAME.

AND THE REASON YOU CAN'T RECALL IT IS SIMPLY BECAUSE WE'VE NEVER MET. I MERELY KNOW OF YOU, MR. BARRETT... AS EVERYONE IN THIS REGION DOES. YOU'RE A WELL-KNOWN FIGURE IN THE CONGO.

...AS WELL AS A WELL-READ AUTHOR IN THE STATES!

MY NAME IS ISABELLE SAXON... AND I WANT YOU TO SEARCH FOR MY FATHER, IVAN SAXON. ONE OF YOUR BOOKS INCLUDES AN ACCOUNT OF HIS PRESUMED DEATH IN A PLANE CRASH FIFTEEN YEARS AGO.

HOWEVER, THE PLANE WRECKAGE HAS NEVER BEEN DISCOVERED. I WANT YOU TO FIND IT... OR MY FATHER.

HUH?

YES, I REMEMBER THE INCIDENT. YOUR FATHER WAS... OR IS... AN EMINENT SCIENTIST WHO CAME TO AFRICA IN SEARCH OF A RARE DRUG-PLANT... A GIANT PLANT STRAIN, I THINK.

CORRECT! HE WAS WITH HIS SECOND WIFE, AN ORIENTAL PRINCESS, AND THEIR DAUGHTER, MY HALF-SISTER. I CHARTERED A PLANE THIS MORNING AND SKIMMED THE AREA OF THE PURPORTED CRASH...

...OBVIOUSLY WITHOUT LUCK!

OBVIOUSLY!



DAWN ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF NAIROBI
THE SUN IS A BLOODY RED SMEAR
STAINING THE HORIZON, SEDUCTIVELY
BECKONING UNWARY TRAVELERS...



...A SAFARI WHICH GRADUALLY SNAKES
ITS TORTUOUS WAY THROUGH THE
DENSE VEIL OF AFRICAN **FOLIAGE**.

...SOON JOINED
BY A STEALTHY
OBSERVER...

WE'LL HAVE TO PASS
THROUGH A WANDERI VILLAGE
SOON. AFTER THAT **ATTACK**,
IT'LL BE **RISKY**... BUT I
WANT TO ASK THE CHIEF...

...WHY DID YOUR
MEN **ATTACK**
US?

MY TRIBESMEN
DID **NOT** ATTACK
YOU.

THEY WERE
WANDERIS...
PLUMED AND PAINTED
FOR WAR.

YOU CLAIM MY
WORD OF HONOR IS
LIKE A DROP OF **DEW**...
WHICH **VANISHES**
BEFORE THE SUN IS
OVERHEAD?

I AM
CALLING YOU A
LIAR...PLAIN AND
SIMPLE!



ALL RIGHT! LET'S
MOVE ON...
WITHOUT ANYMORE
TROUBLE.



STOP HIM,
ALBRIGHT! STOP
HIM AND KILL
HIM...

...IF YOU **DON'T**
KILL HIM, I SWEAR
TO YOU I'LL CUT OFF
THE SUPPLY OF DRUGS,
EVEN IF HE **DOESN'T**
DISCOVER OUR
OPERATION!



NIGHT... AND THE FLICKERING CAPER
OF A CAMPFIRE AT ONCE **REPELS**
NOCTURNAL PREDATORS AND
ATTRACTS HUMANS WHO WOULD
OTHERWISE SERVE AS THEIR HELPLESS
PREY...

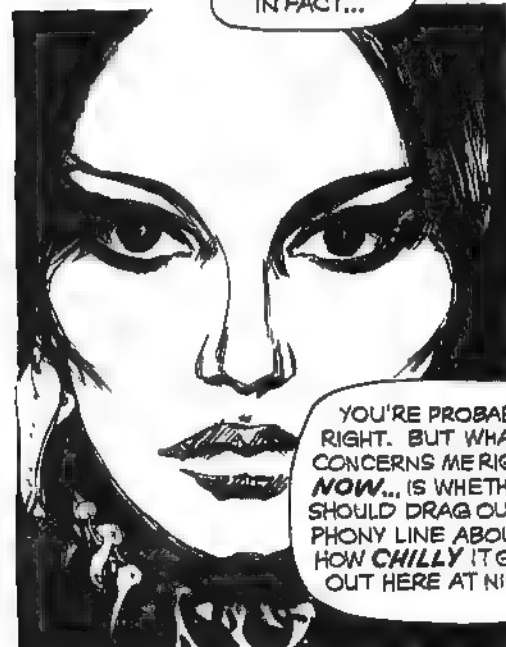
YOUR BOOK
STATED THAT THE
SITE OF THE REPUTED
CRASH WAS NEAR A
RIVER, MR.
BARRET...?

THE ZAMBEZI...
WHICH IS WHERE WE'RE
HEADED.

HERE! TAKE SOME
COFFEE... AND CALL ME
GEORGE. IT'S THREE
SYLLABLES SHORTER
THAN **MR. BARRET!**



YOUR
BRACELET IS
VERY BEAUTIFUL...
VERY
DISTINCTIVE,
IN FACT...



YOU'RE PROBABLY
RIGHT. BUT WHAT
CONCERNS ME RIGHT
NOW... IS WHETHER I
SHOULD DRAG OUT THE
PHONY LINE ABOUT
HOW **CHILLY** IT GETS
OUT HERE AT NIGHT...



...I'M ALMOST
CONVINCED I'VE
SEEN IT
BEFORE.

I DOUBT **THAT**.
IT WAS A GIFT FROM MY
FATHER... HE HAD IT
MADE FROM HIS OWN
DESIGN.



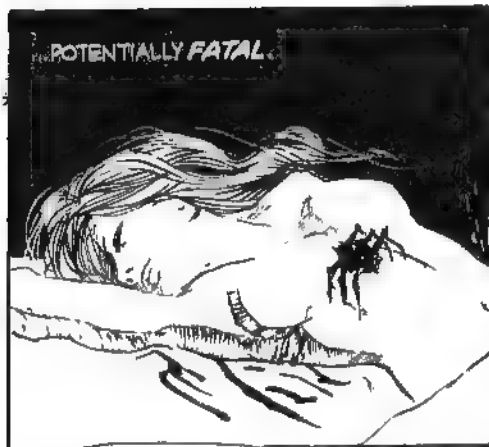
...OR JUST PUT
MY ARM AROUND YOU
BECAUSE I **WANT**
TO.

EITHER WAY...
IS FINE WITH ME...
GEORGE.

FOR ISABELLE SAXON, *SLUMBER*
THAT NIGHT IS DEEP, *CONTENTED*...
AND...



POTENTIALLY *FATAL*...



BUT *ONLY* POTENTIALLY...



...AS THIS STEALTHY AND BEAUTIFUL
GUARDIAN HAS *ASSURED*...



AND ONCE ASSURED, SHE *EXITS* THE
TENT...

LISTEN, ALBRIGHT,
OUR PARTNERSHIP HAS
WORKED *FINE* SO FAR!
I'VE SUPPLIED THE *CRUDE*
DRUGS, AND YOU'VE
REFINED AND *SMUGGLED*
THEM INTO AMERICA. BUT IF
BARRET FINDS THAT PLANE
WRECK...

YOU THINK
I DON'T *KNOW*
THAT? I'LL *STOP*
HIM! BUT I CAN'T
JUST GO UP AND
BLOW HIS *HEAD*
OFF!

I'VE GOT TO WAIT FOR
AN *OPPORTUNITY*...
AND *YOU'VE* GOT TO QUIT
BEING SO IMPATIENT JUST
BECAUSE HE BELTED YOU
IN THE *MOUTH*.



WHAT THE...?
WHO IS *SHE*?!

LUANA!!



THAT BRACELET...!
IT'S *IDENTICAL* TO
THE ONE ISABELLE
SAXON WEARS!

AND THIS...TH.S
LUANA IS PART
ORIENTAL. SHE
MUST BE IVAN
SAXON'S *DAUGHTER*
BY HIS *SECOND*
WIFE...THE
3-YEAR-OLD WHO
WENT DOWN IN THE
CRASH, AND
SOMEHOW
SURVIVED..!





"...RAFT."

MR. BARRET, I
THINK THE PORTERS
COULD USE A
REST.

ALL RIGHT,
ROBERTO, WE'RE
GETTING CLOSE TO
THE ALLEGED
CRASH SITE
ANYWAY...



...AND I COULD **USE** A
LITTLE NAP IN **PRIVACY**.
THAT RUCKUS LAST NIGHT
OBLITERATED MY
SLEEP.

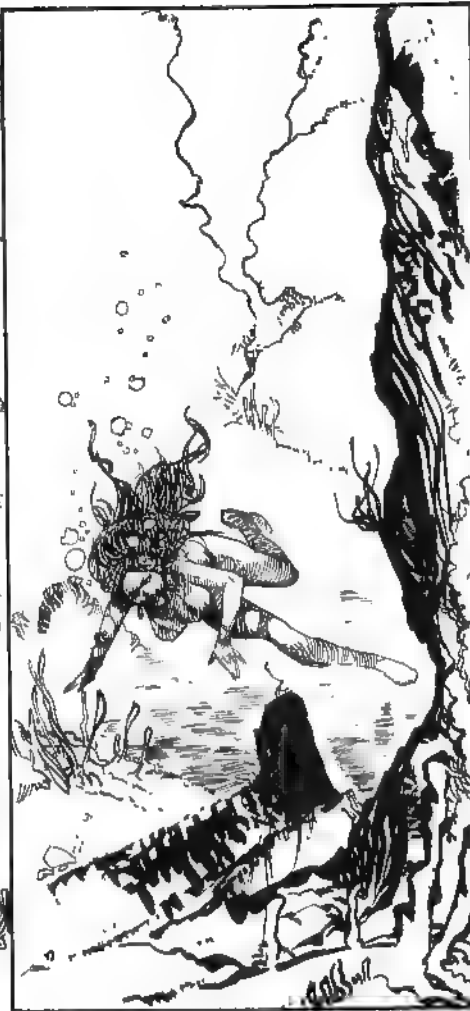
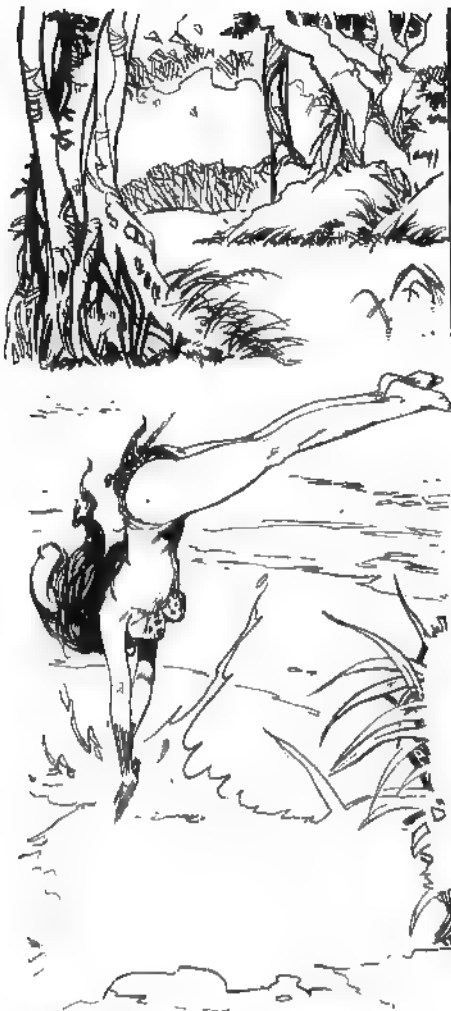


SO...IT **WASN'T**
A DREAM, YOU DO
EXIST.

BUT WHERE'D
YOU GET THAT **MIRROR**?
YOU CERTAINLY DIDN'T
MAKE IT **YOURSELF**,
HERE IN THE **JUNGLE**...



YOU WANT ME
TO **FOLLOW** YOU?
I TAKE IT YOU'RE
GOING TO **SHOW**
ME WHERE YOU GOT
THE MIRROR...?



WELL... I'LL
... **BE**...

THE PLANE
CRASHED INTO
THE RIVER.



ROBERTO! BRING
THAT SCUBA GEAR
DOWN HERE! **FAST!**



...TWO ADULT
SKELETONS BUT
NO EVIDENCE OF
THE **CHILD**.



AFTER SALVAGING NIAN SAXON'S
RESEARCH FILES AND **PERSONAL**
DIARY...

ISABELLE, THIS DIARY
DISCLOSES THE FACT THAT
YOUR FATHER'S "TRUSTED
FRIEND"... **ALBRIGHT**
HERE... WAS ENGAGED
IN A **DRUG-RUNNING**
OPERATION...

...AND THE VERY **LAST**
ENTRY, WRITTEN IN A
PANICKED **SCRAWL**,
REVEALS THAT **ALBRIGHT**
SABOTAGED THE PLANE
... **FORCED** IT TO CRASH
... SO YOUR FATHER
WOULD NEVER GET THE
CHANCE TO TURN HIM
IN.

THAT'S A
LIE!!



ALBRIGHT, YOU FOOL! YOU'VE RUINED US!! YOU WERE TO STOP BARRET... I'LL KILL YOU, YOU FOOL...!

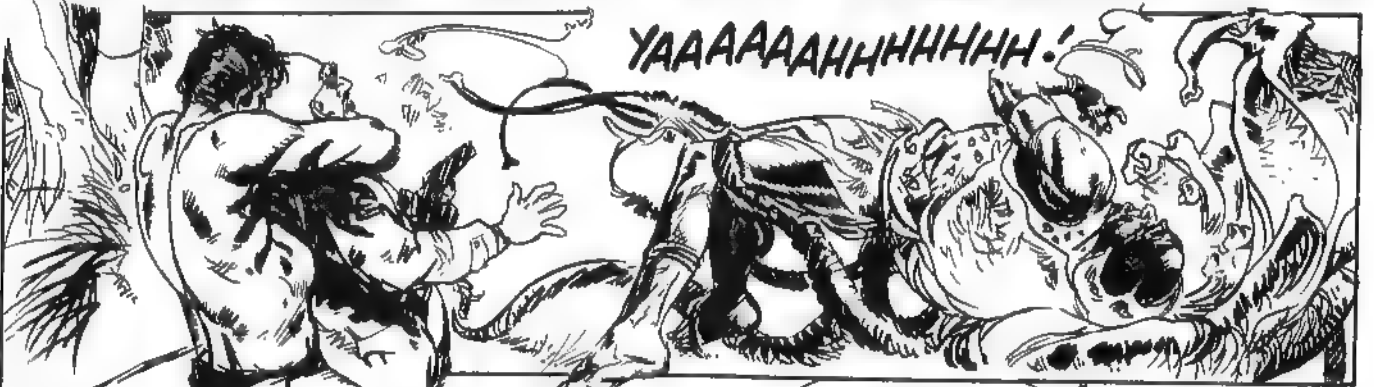
ALBRIGHT, SHOVED THE WANDERER CHIEF BACK... INTO THE GROING VINES OF A MAN-EATING PLANT...



STOP IT, YOU IGNORANT SAVAGE...! FIGHTING ME WON'T...



NO...!



YAAAAAAHHHHHHH!



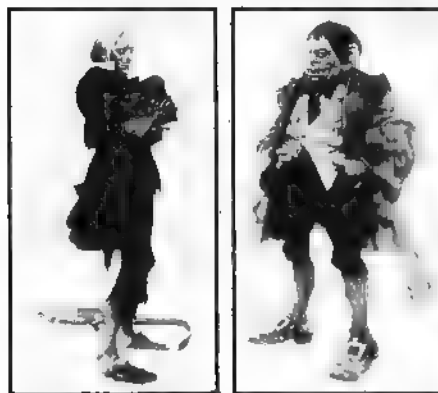
BLAM

POOR ALBRIGHT! ACCORDING TO YOUR FATHER'S RESEARCH FILES, THE RARE GIANT DRUG PLANT ALBRIGHT AND THE CHIEF WERE AFTER...

...WAS RIGHT HERE ALL ALONG! BUT IT TURNED OUT TO BE DEADLY TO MORE THAN JUST HOPELESS JUNKIES IN THE STATES.

ONE THING'S FOR CERTAIN! WE WOULDN'T HAVE UNCOVERED ANY OF THIS WITHOUT YOUR HALF-SISTER... WITHOUT LUANA.





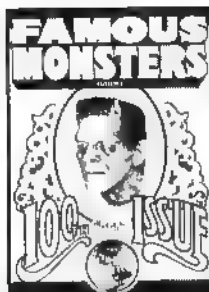
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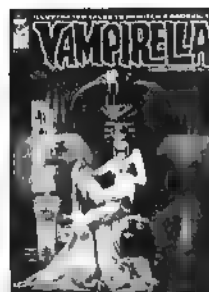
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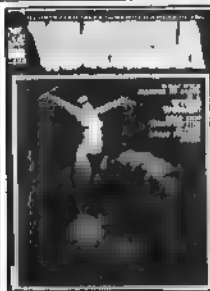
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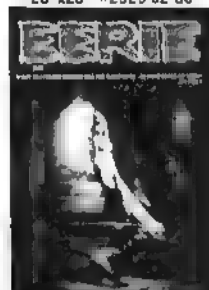
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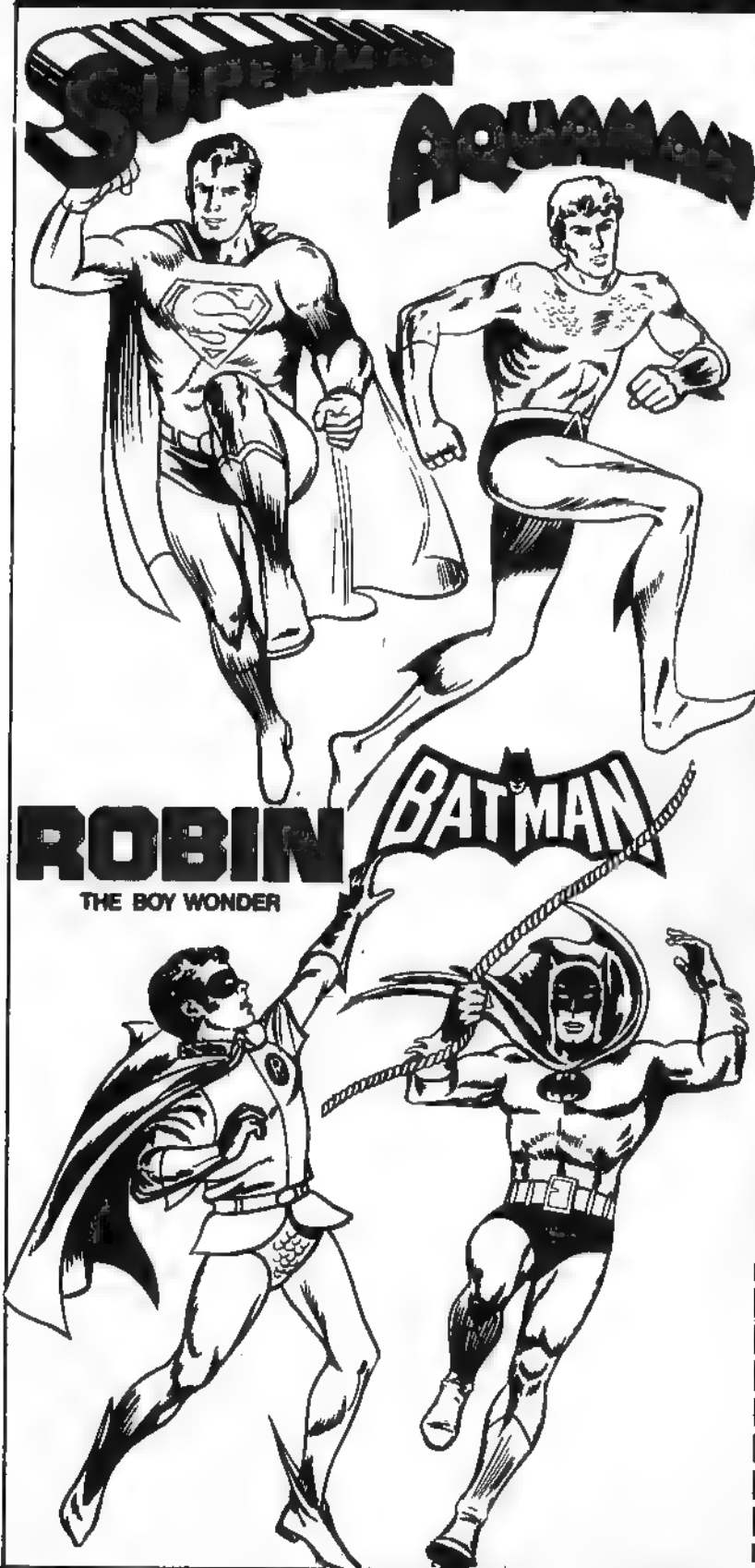
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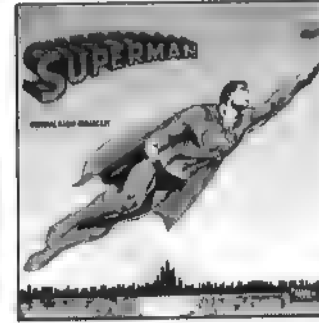
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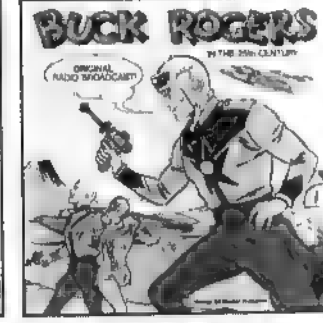
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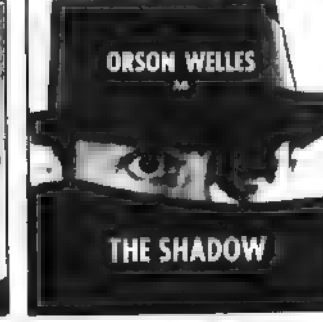
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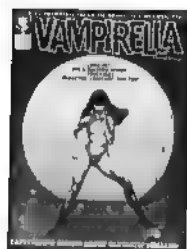


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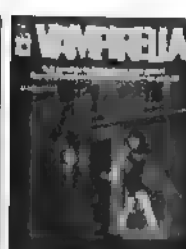
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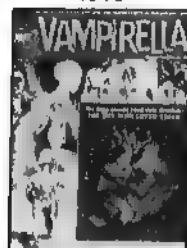
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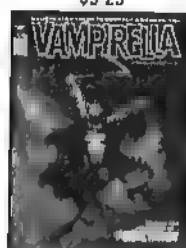
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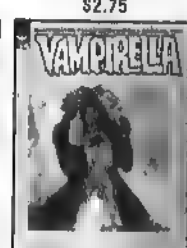
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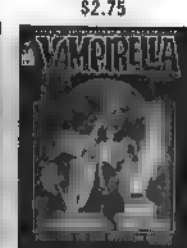
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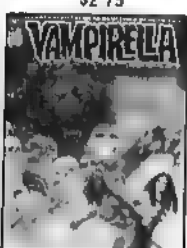
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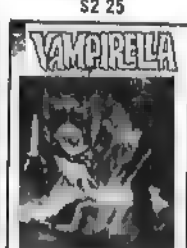
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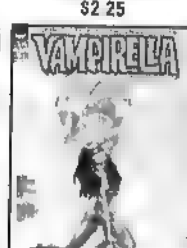
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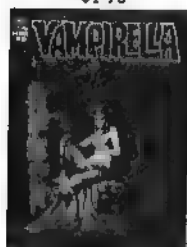
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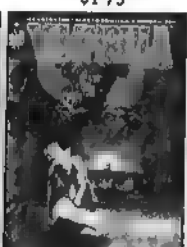
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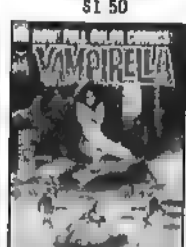
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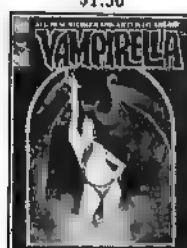
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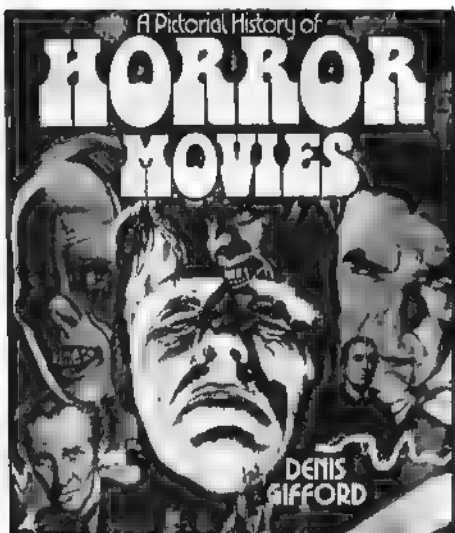


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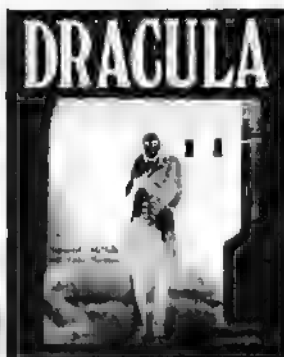
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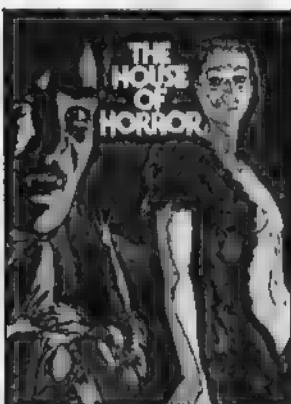
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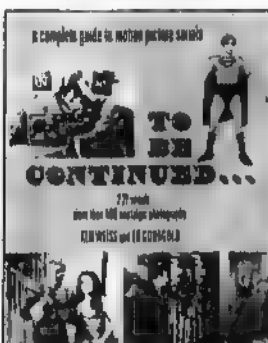
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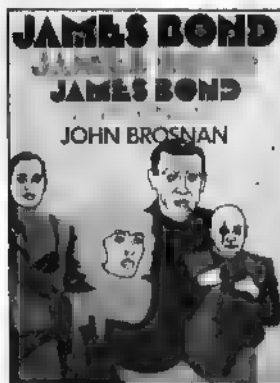
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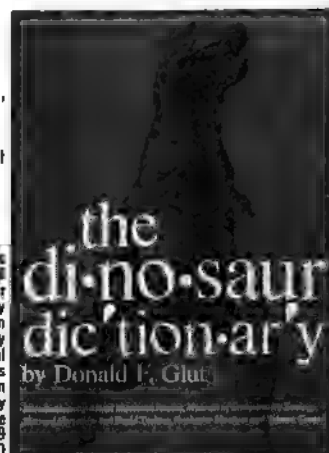
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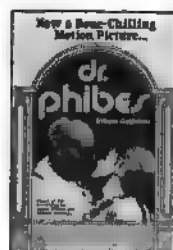
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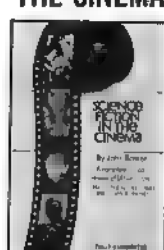
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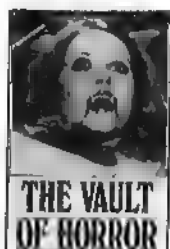
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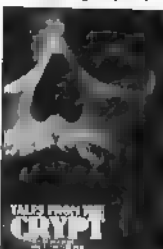
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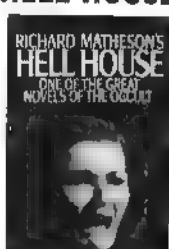
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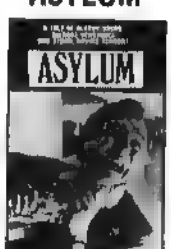
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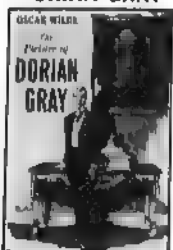
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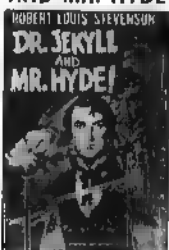
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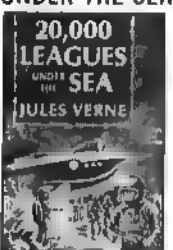
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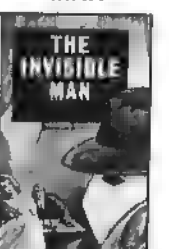
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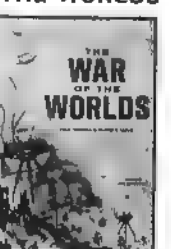
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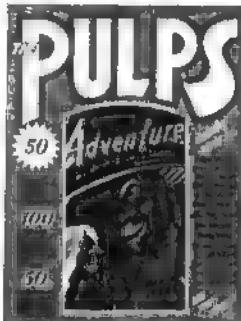
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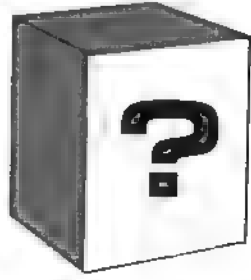


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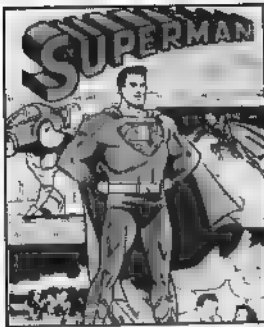


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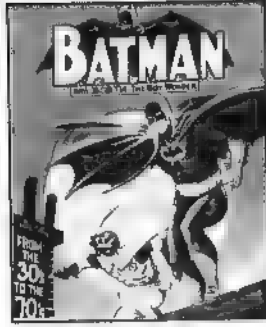
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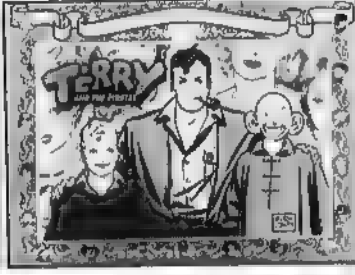
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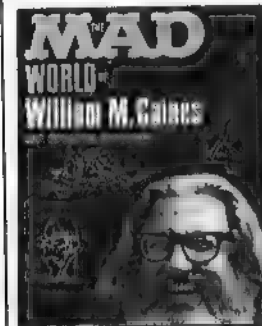
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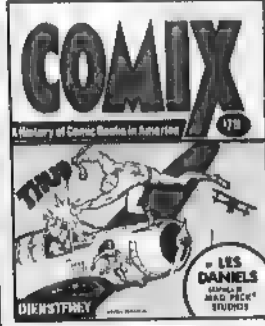
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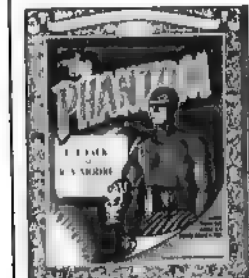
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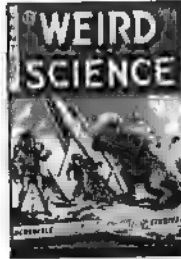


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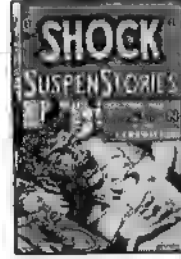
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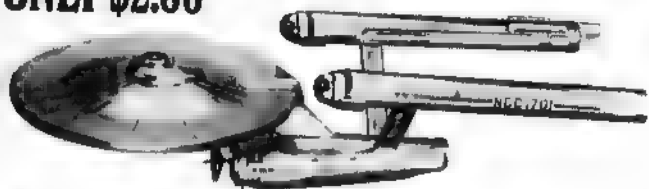


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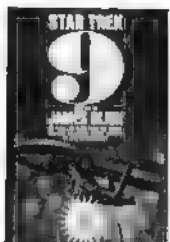
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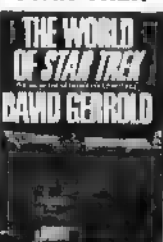
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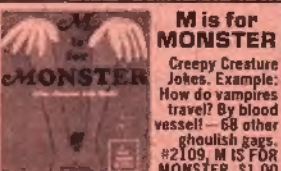
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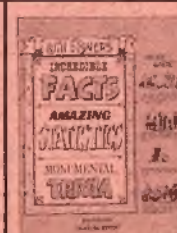


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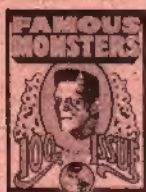
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